

IN MANY LANDS



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IN MANY LANDS



THE ETERNAL WANDERER

I gather only autumn leaves, that
slowly tumble down,
I gather only autumn leaves, all
withered, dull and brown;
I wonder where those restless birds
are winging over sea! . . .
I gather leaves the cold has slain;
What though the summer bloom
again—
It cannot bloom for me.

I see a shining little ship that sails
to countries far:
I see a ship that homeward sails to
where my People are. . . .
How my heart longs to follow
you, strange birds, across the
sea! . . .
No brown leaves there, but glowing
flowers:
And, in the long and golden hours,
They'll bloom again for me.

IN MANY LANDS

STORIES OF HOW THE SCATTERED
JEWS KEPT THEIR FESTIVALS

By

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"JEWISH HOLYDAY STORIES," "THE NEW LAND," ETC.



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This Volume is Affectionately Dedicated
to
HAROLD W. LEVINGER
at the Beginning of a New Year



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PREFACE

There is a legend that when the Jews were driven forth into exile, they carried with them stones of their broken and pillaged Temple at Jerusalem. Those who bore the sacred relics bowed bleeding backs beneath their weight and often fell exhausted in the dust of the road that led to Babylon. And in time these stones, like so many rare and precious things, vanished and were never seen again.

But in his exile the Jew treasured other stones of great price, gems which he valued far more than the jewels and gold his enemies snatched from his coffers. They were the festival days of his people.

Israel was scattered over the face of the whole earth; his weary, bleeding feet left a crimson trail from Palestine, where the Romans had ploughed the site of the Temple, to Spain with its palms and golden sunshine, and Russia, terrible with darkness and cold. And everywhere the Jew forgot the griefs of exile and the hatred of his neighbors as he rejoiced in the festivals of his broken nation. Israel in the Middle Ages was a beggar, but beneath his ragged cloak he bore a casket of precious jewels, which on appointed days he drew forth that he might look upon them and rejoice in their beauty and remember the days when he had ruled as a king.

In these stories of Old World Jewry, I have shown you the jewels in many settings—from the days of the

Roman tyrants down to our own time when even harsher foes sought to destroy our people. But the Jew still remains unbroken and he still carries from land to land the chain of precious gems which bind him to his past.

ELMA EHRLICH LEVINGER.

Wilmington, Del.
January, 1923.

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IN MANY LANDS

ROSH HASHONAH

THE JEWISH NEW YEAR

Rosh Hashonah, which means the head (or the beginning) of the year, is the Jewish New Year. The Jew does not usher in his New Year with noise and thoughtless festivities. For him it is not a time of feasting and merry-making; it is a day set aside for meditation and consecrated by the old ritual of the synagogue.

For Rosh Hashonah is also the Day of Judgment, and on this holy day the Jew believes that God takes accounting of his deeds, good and evil, for the past year. It is the Day of Remembrance, and the people of Israel try to recall how they have spent the last twelve months and ask themselves what judgment should be written against their names in the Book no man may see. We do not wish each other a happy New Year, but exchange the greeting, *leshonah tova tikosevu* (May you be written for a good year), desiring that all Jews may have their names inscribed in the Book of Life.

Rosh Hashonah is ushered in by the blowing of the Shofar, or trumpet, which in ancient times was sounded to call together all the valiant soldiers of Israel; at its sound they left their tents and assembled to prepare for

battle. Tradition says that the first Shofar was fashioned out of a ram's horn, that very ram which God sent to lay upon the altar instead of Isaac, whom his father Abraham had already bound for the sacrifice. To this day it is the traditional ram's horn that on Rosh Hashonah calls all Jews to gather in their synagogues to read again the story of Abraham's obedience and to renew their vows of allegiance to the Jewish people and the Jewish religion.

Of all the prayers uttered upon Rosh Hashonah none has been more hallowed through use and tradition than the *Unesaneh Tokef*, attributed to Rabbi Amnon of Mayence. Amnon, so runs the old story, although a despised Jew, still stood high in favor with his friend, the archbishop of Mayence. But one day his patron suddenly demanded that Amnon should turn Christian. The rabbi was so taken by surprise that instead of refusing to accept baptism, he begged for three days in which he might consider whether he should forsake the faith of his fathers.

Safe at home he was overcome with remorse and shame that he had not defied the archbishop and absolutely refused to renounce Judaism. When the third day arrived on which he was to go to the palace, he did not leave his house; when the archbishop became impatient and sent a messenger for him, he boldly refused to obey the summons. Then the archbishop sent armed men to the house of Rabbi Amnon and they took him by force to the palace.

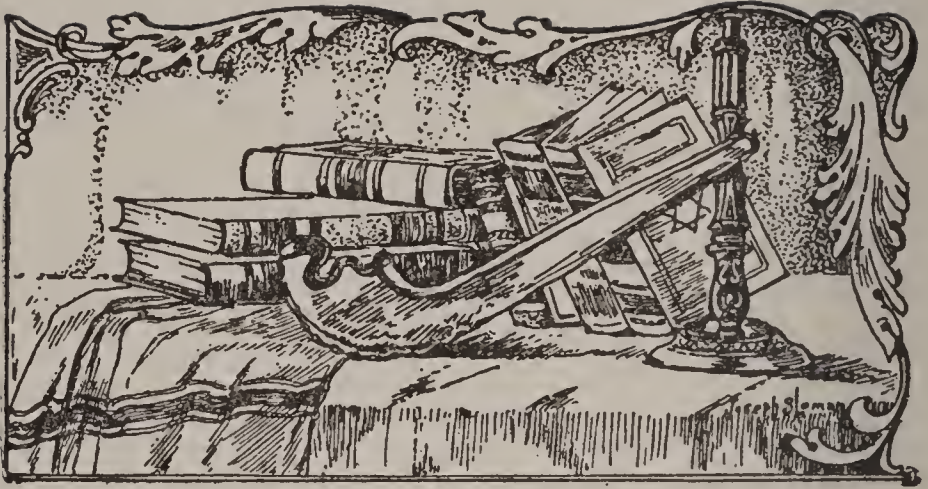
"My Lord," Amnon answered when the archbishop demanded to know the reason of his disobedience, "I knew that if I refused to answer your summons, you would have me severely punished. And I desire punishment, since I was too cowardly three days ago to

defy you and refuse to give up my religion. Since my tongue seemed to deny my faith, let it be torn from my mouth."

"Nay," said the archbishop, "but your feet that would not follow my messenger will be cut off and your hands also be hacked from your body."

The archbishop's orders were carried out and Rabbi Amnon was carried back to the Jewish quarter to die, that other Jews might look upon his sufferings and be warned by his fate. Amnon begged his friends to carry him to the synagogue, where his brethren were ushering in the New Year with prayer and song. Lying upon his litter, he conquered his death agony and composed the hymn known to-day as the *Unesaneh Tokef*, a magnificent poem describing God's Day of Judgment.

From that day Jews who gather to hear the blowing of the Shofar recite the prayer of the rabbi of Mayence. In the dark days of Spain, when to profess Judaism meant death, hundreds of Marranos (secret Jews) must have found comfort and inspiration in his story as they met in their hidden synagogues to praise the God of their fathers. Perhaps it was the thought of this earlier martyr that urged "The Man Who Came Late" to hurry to his brethren as they met for their secret Rosh Hashonah rites over four hundred years ago.



THE SHOFAR CALL

*Within the synagogue the light is dim;
The air is hushed around;
Even the silence seems to pray until
We hear the Shofar sound.*

*O Shofar, thrill us with thy battle strain,
Till each young heart will echo Israel's pain,
And, like a trumpet clear,
Sound to the world the vow we pledge anew:
Proudly to bear the sacred name of Jew
Untarnished through the year!*

THE MAN WHO CAME LATE

A Story of Rosh Hashonah in Spain

The handful of men, women and children who had gathered in the cellar of Don Pedro's house for their Rosh Hashonah services, murmured their prayers in fear-hushed voices, although they knew there was little chance that their words would penetrate through the thick stone walls into the ears of spies who lingered outside. For the Marranos had grown accustomed to fear even when there was very little likelihood of betrayal and punishment—and they were most afraid when they prayed in secret to the deserted God of their fathers.

Those who gathered in the cellar of Don Pedro's stately mansion were secret Jews; Jews who, fearing the tortures of the Inquisition and the death by fire meted out to so many faithful Israelites by their Spanish rulers, sought to save their lives and their fortunes by seeming to accept the Christian religion. They baptized their children and attended Mass; they spoke only Spanish and seemed to discard all the rites and customs of Judaism. It is easy to call them traitors and cowards, but it is well to remember that more than the fear of suffering and death determined their denial of Judaism. These Jews, who had grown to love the sunny land of

Spain as their own homes, knew that even if the Inquisition allowed them to escape with their lives they faced eternal banishment. And thus many of them declared that they were in truth Spaniards, not Jews, and promised to live like the Christians around them.

But the Judaism that they had promised to forswear still ruled their hearts. Jews who had long appeared Christians in every sense, could not entirely forget and forsake the customs of their fathers. It was forbidden to recite the old Jewish prayers, yet many a Marrano mother risked her life to teach her little child the "*Shema*", although she knew only too well that one of her servants might spy upon her and deliver her to the Inquisition as a traitor. Although there was not a man or woman gathered in Don Pedro's cellar to listen to the blowing of the Shofar who had not seen some of his brethren and his friends done to death for heresy, still the Jews dared to come together to keep the ancient Judgment Day of their people. And as they prayed they trembled with fear, lest their own lives and the lives of those they held dear should be made to pay for their daring.

Don Alfonso, a very old man, still singularly like a Jewish patriarch in spite of the rich Spanish garments he wore, conducted the services. The others followed him, the younger members of the secret congregation tripping now and then as their tongues recited the unfamiliar Hebrew they so seldom heard. But Don Alfonso had lived in the golden days of freedom, when Spain had proved herself another

Jerusalem for the exiled Jew; he had known Jewish poets who sang fearlessly in their own loved Hebrew tongue; he remembered the festivals when as a little child he had gone with his parents to worship the God of Israel before the sight of all men and had not dreamed of being afraid. When he remembered these things his eyes turned sadly toward the door of the cellar where a youth crouched with a dagger in his hand, ready to spring upon any informer who chanced upon them, and slay him before he escaped with his tale to the servants of the Inquisition; and so bitter was the contrast between his memory pictures and the cruel present, that Don Alfonso often wept aloud and could not go on for his weeping. And the others wept also, even the younger men and women who could not recall happier days, for they shared his sorrow and his shame over the hapless lot of Israel.

While these Marranos and their families prayed and wept in the vault-like cellar of the house of Don Pedro, a certain Spanish nobleman of much wealth and high degree walked leisurely up and down the courtyard of his palace talking to the Cardinal who had deigned to visit him that morning. The Cardinal was an old man with a face so hard and cold that his delicate features seemed to be carved out of ivory; the nobleman, Don Luis, had not yet reached middle age; his dark, glowing face was alive with feeling, his gestures quick with the animation that characterizes the Spaniard, and there was nothing in either his face or his bearing to betray that he belonged to the despised Jewish race. Yet, as he

spoke, the Cardinal eyed him now and then with looks of cold suspicion.

"I have heard sad rumors since my return from Rome," he told Don Luis as they strolled together under the spreading palms. "We dared to hope that our Holy Inquisition has long stamped out these Jewish back-sliders; yet now I hear that certain noblemen, high in the favor of the Court and Church, still dare to observe the rites of their accursed religion." He looked at Don Luis sternly, almost accusingly. "Your father was burned by the Inquisition for his heresy," he said, "and there may still be those as stubborn and stiff-necked as he, who, drawn into the bosom of Mother Church, still cling to their heretical faith. Because of your father's standing in the old Jewish community, you may be in their counsels. Well," impatiently, as the younger man did not answer, "have you heard aught of recanting from any converted Jew?"

Don Luis shook his head. "I am a faithful son of the Church," he answered, smiling, "and had I heard such rumors I should have repeated them at once to the officers of the Inquisition. Surely, you do not doubt my zeal, father!"

"I have no reason to, for you seem of sound mind, and only a madman would court his own destruction," answered the Cardinal with a grim smile. "You stand higher in the king's favor than any man with his veins dishonored by Jewish blood; you are known as a loyal subject and a faithful son of the Church. No, you would not be such a madman as

to risk your fortunes and your life by recanting for the sake of your father's religion."

"You have spoken truly," answered Don Luis smoothly. "I am indeed a loyal subject and a faithful son of the Church."

"And yet—" the Cardinal's piercing eyes scanned the young man's guileless face, "and yet—I have heard rumors against you." He noticed that Don Luis did not wince or change color, but only looked back at him with his air of courteous attention. "It would not be hard to convince me that rumors concerning your love for Judaism were quite groundless," insinuated the Cardinal.

"I am willing to do anything to prove myself as loyal and faithful, as I am sure you believe me to be," was the answer. "What does the Church require of me?"

The Cardinal drew his host to one of the low seats beside a marble fountain. Perfumed water tinkled gently into a basin of many-colored stones; birds of bright plumage sang from flowering trees—a lovely scene, yet Don Luis saw instead the damp prison cell where he had slept under sentence of death while his father paid at the stake for his loyalty to Judaism. To Don Luis, then only a boy, had come the choice of baptism or the same horrible death, and he had not found it hard to choose. Now he shivered a little, in spite of the warm sunshine, as he wondered whether the cold walls of the prison were again beginning to close about him.

"What must I do to prove my loyalty to the Church?" he repeated.

"I have heard that your friend Don Pedro and certain members of his family have been acting somewhat suspiciously of late," said the Cardinal in his smooth tones. "If such accusations are false, we need go no further. If, on the other hand, Don Pedro and others of his family have been drifting back into Judaism, it will be easy for you to obtain information, since your father stood so high among the Jews of his own day. You understand me?" he ended significantly.

"You mean you wish me to spy upon Don Pedro and those of his household?" asked Don Luis. "You know he is one of my dearest friends."

The Cardinal laid one of his white, jeweled hands upon the young man's shoulder. "If Don Pedro were your own brother and were guilty, it would be your duty as a loyal son of the Church to hand him over to the officers of the Inquisition," he said sternly. His keen eyes grew crafty. "You are rich," he said, with a significant glance about the beautiful court, "but not rich enough to wed the king's niece. You see," smiling, "I have heard more than one rumor about you! But if Don Pedro were found guilty of returning to Judaism, it might be arranged that certain of his confiscated estates would revert to you. With such a fortune, our monarch would not long withhold his consent to your suit for his niece's hand."

Don Luis rose and bowed low before the Cardinal. "I do not need this added favor from the king to teach me my duty," he said quietly. "I wish only to prove to you that my loyalty to the Church is

greater than even my love for my old friend, Don Pedro. Should I find him guilty of heresy, I shall count myself blessed if I am able to hand him over to the officers of the Inquisition."

The Cardinal rose to leave, settling his bright robes about him. "I knew that I could count on your loyalty in all things," he said graciously.

"I will accompany you to the gate," was all Don Luis answered. Turning to one of his servants he gave a low, whispered order. "Saddle my horse at once," he commanded, then turned back smilingly to his guest.

A few moments later Don Luis rode swiftly down the street to his friend's estate. He, too, had heard rumors of Don Pedro's back-sliding; although a loyal son of the Church, he knew that the Jewish festival of Rosh Hashonah had arrived and that it would not be difficult to find recanting Jews celebrating the ancient holy day of his people. A mocking smile played about his mouth as he thought of the bribes the Cardinal had offered him; he spurred on his horse and rode faster than ever.

Reaching the stately mansion, he found his way to the cellar down a secret passage that Don Pedro had once shown him in all the simplicity of his trusting heart. Again Don Luis smiled mockingly at his friend's faith in him, a faith that might deliver him into the executioner's hands. Moving softly, daring scarcely to breathe, he who had been appointed to betray his brethren crept to the open door of the secret cellar.

For a moment the young man who had guarded

it with ready dagger had relaxed his watchfulness. He now stood facing the improvised altar at which Don Alfonso stood, the ram's horn at his lips. Taught long ago by his own father to sound the trumpet, the patriarch blew the first blast upon the Shofar.

But only once—for the youth who guarded the door, warned, by he knew not what, that he was not alone, turned to face the man who lurked in the shadows. In his sudden spasm of fear he did not wait to see whether the man who had come late was friend or foe; with a low cry of alarm he hurled himself upon the intruder and buried his dagger in his breast.

Don Luis lurched to the ground, his life blood staining his rich garments and the jeweled chain which the king's niece had given him for a love token. His fellow Jews gathered about him, white, horrified, this one demanding why he had come so late, the next bidding the others cease their lamentations lest they be discovered. The boy who had guarded the door bent over the dying man, almost mad with grief. "I thought you had come to spy upon us," he sobbed, "and I struck before I saw your face."

Don Luis waved him aside. "Lose not a moment," he gasped, "but have me secretly conveyed to my home and give out word that I fell by my own hand. And do not tarry here longer, for the spies of the Inquisition are on your track, and unless you are more wary in the future they will discover you. Today the Cardinal told me—he lingered—and that

is why—I came so late——.” He panted for breath and clung to the hand of old Don Alfonso who bent over him.

“He thought I would betray you,” said Don Luis, and he smiled in spite of the agony of death closing in about him. “But I came to warn you—you are all my friends—and Jews—and I cannot forget how my father died.” His head in its richly-plumed cap fell heavily upon his breast, but with a last effort he pulled himself up to a sitting position. “I would die as my father died,” he panted, “*Shema Yisrael*——!” And he fell back upon Don Alfonso’s breast.

The old man raised his face, and those about him saw the tears coursing down his wrinkled cheeks. “The memory of the righteous is a blessing,” he murmured. “He has not shamed his father in his death, for he, too, dies for Israel. *Shema Yisrael*,” he chanted, and the others took up the words, mourning their dead.

So a New Year dawned for Don Pedro and his friends as, heavy-hearted and fearful, they went forth into the world with masked faces, seeing a spy of the Inquisition at every turn, yet determined to worship, although in secret, the God they had been forced to deny.

YOM KIPPUR

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, comes seven days after Rosh Hashonah. During the ten days of penitence, including the two holy days, many Jews offer special prayers at their early morning services, asking forgiveness for any sins committed during the past year. The Sabbath which falls during this period is called the Sabbath of Return, because on this day the worshippers in the synagogue listen to the reading of certain portions from the prophet Isaiah urging the Jewish people to return to God.

Yom Kippur, which is kept as a fast day, is the most solemn holy day in the Jewish calendar. In old times it was set aside for special sacrifices in the Temple; here the High Priest appeared before the people dressed in the prescribed garments of linen, a coat and breeches, a girdle and a cap of peculiar design. First he offered up a young bull in the name of his own family; after praying for his fellow-priests in Israel, he sprinkled the purifying blood of the animal about the Holy of Holies, a room in the Temple which no man might enter except the High Priest, and forbidden even to him except on Yom Kippur. From the two goats brought before him, one, selected by lot, was set apart for the Lord and slain as a sacrifice; the other, the "scape-goat," was then brought forward; now the High Priest confessed the

sins of all Israel and prayed that this special sacrifice would be the sin-offering for the entire nation. Then, as symbol of the desire of the people to drive all evil out of their midst, the scape-goat was driven out into the hills and the desolate places outside Jerusalem.

But the destruction of the Temple meant the end of sacrifices upon the altar. Prayer and charity, taught the rabbis, would take the place of sacrifice. Yom Kippur, from the day of special sacrifice, grew to be the day of special prayers.

From early morning until dusk the Jew today spends Yom Kippur in prayer. Many wear shrouds to remind them of the shortness of life and the certainty of death and Judgment. On this Day of Judgment, when the Jew prays for forgiveness for sins of the past year, he remembers that he must first forgive his neighbors for any offense they may have committed against him as well as ask their forgiveness for any fault of his own. On this solemn day he resolves to do better in the year to come. Although a solemn day, Yom Kippur is not a day of penance or sorrow. In the days when the Temple stood, the Jewish people had a lovely custom called the Dance in the Vine-yards. The maidens of Jerusalem would exchange garments, rich girls with poor, that those less wealthy would not be put to shame by the more costly clothes of their friends. As they danced, they sang happy songs, and often a young man watching them would choose a bride from among them in this festal dance of Yom Kippur.

Today there are no happy rites or merrymaking. But Yom Kippur, with its assurance of forgiveness and a closer unity with God, brings a happiness unequalled by any other Jewish holy day.

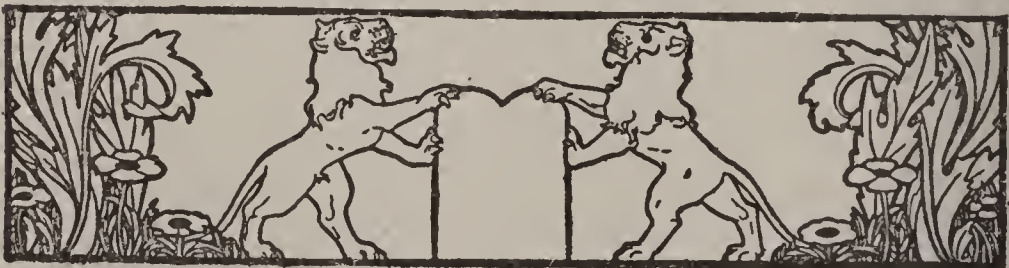


THE ATONEMENT OFFERING

*In other days we placed upon Thine altar
The sacrifice of sin:
All Israel bowed before the awful portals—
Thine high priest entered in.*

*He entered in and we lay awed and waiting
Upon the Temple floor,
Until we knew our gift had been accepted,
And hoped to live once more.*

*Still Israel, sin-offering of the nations,
Trembles beneath the knife:
When wilt Thou give the sign of our redemption,
And grant us life?*



THE DAY OF RETURN *

A Story of Yom Kippur in Holland

Even until the day of her death Maria Nunez retained the wondrous beauty that had won her fame in the courts of distant Portugal and had attracted the favor of Queen Elizabeth herself in the days when England humbled Spain and became the mistress of the sea. Her children's children that crowded about her knee never tired of hearing of her adventures ere she came to Holland; and the story they loved best of all was the tale of that strange Yom Kippur in Amsterdam, when the Jewish refugees from Spain and Portugal feared that they had to seek still further for a place of freedom.

In the dark days when Spain and Portugal persecuted the unhappy Jews within their borders, many driven by fear of banishment from the land they had learned to love pretended to accept baptism and the teachings of the Church. These were called Marranos, and so skilfully did they play their parts that many of them rose high in favor of the court, considered by all the world as Christians, while in their hearts they still followed the religion of Israel. Some of them even practiced Jewish rites in the

* Practically every incident in this story is founded on fact.

utmost secrecy, for they knew that betrayal to the officers of the Inquisition meant a cruel and certain death.

Now among these Marranos, or secret Jews, was a noble woman, Mayor Rodrigues, who longed with all her heart to practice the religion of Israel before the whole world. The people of Holland, who at a later day were to grant freedom of religious worship to a band of Englishmen called Pilgrims, were even then noted for their tolerance, since they too had broken from the bigoted rule of Spain and knew the horrors of persecution. And so Mayor Rodrigues, a loyal mother in Israel, dreamed that her four children would some day dwell in Holland where they might worship the God of their fathers in peace.

So when in 1593 a ship left Portugal bearing ten Marranos on board, Miguel Lopez, long a secret Jew but now desiring to live as befitted a son of Israel, was among the refugees, taking as his charge two of the noble woman's children, Manuel Lopez Pereira and the boy's lovely sister, Maria Nunez. Not only did Maria charm all on board the vessel by her beauty of face and charm of manner, but when danger threatened her people she was able like Esther of old to avert the disaster and turn their mourning into joy. For in those days when the hatred between England and the kingdoms of the Spanish peninsula was deep and bitter, the English ships were charged to capture any vessel they might find sailing the seas beneath the Spanish-Portuguese flag. The vessel on which Maria Nunez sought to escape from Por-

tugal was captured by a crew under the command of a powerful English duke, who, seeing her, loved her and desired to make her his bride. It was not an easy choice for the girl to make; reared in the luxuries of the Portuguese kingdom, it was hard to give up the ease and comforts promised her in the English court for the uncertainties and hardship which awaited her in Holland. But Maria, true to her mother's teachings, declared that she wished to live as a Jewess and could not accept him as her husband.

With the other refugees and the crew of the captured vessel she was taken to London as a prisoner. Here Queen Elizabeth, as interested at times in the love affairs of her courtiers as in statecraft, heard of the duke's unsuccessful suit and ordered that the beautiful Jewess who had refused his hand should be brought before her. The old stories tell how the girl's beauty charmed Elizabeth, who gave her rich presents and rode with her in an open carriage through the London streets that she might see the city. And one legend tells that when the queen asked the Portuguese maiden to name some gift or privilege as token of the English monarch's friendship, Maria Nunez asked only that she and her fellow Jews be given safe conduct to Holland where they might know that freedom denied them not only in Spain and Portugal but also in mighty England, from which they had long been banished.

Elizabeth granted her request, dismissing the girl with the gift of a rich gold chain which her descendants show with pride to this very day; then the brave

little band set out for Holland, their hearts high with hope. But theirs was a perilous and stormy voyage and the captain had actually given up their vessel for lost when he was able to reach the harbor of Emden in safety. Here among the handful of German Jews dwelt the learned Moses Uri Halevi, a Jew at heart like themselves but fearful of professing his faith too loudly before the inhabitants of the place where he lived.

"Go to Amsterdam if you would confess your faith," he advised. "The folk of Amsterdam will surely be tolerant to those who have sought to escape from the Church which for so long ruled Holland with a rod of iron. Here the people still look with suspicion on strangers and it might not be safe to profess your conversion to Judaism too strongly; but in Amsterdam you will come to no harm."

"And why do you not dwell in Amsterdam?" asked Jacob Tirado, the leader of the Portuguese refugees.

"It has long been the desire of my heart," confessed Moses Uri, "and if God wills I may join you there ere many days, and we will enjoy peace and the free exercise of our religion."

He kept his word. Shortly after the Jews from Portugal arrived in Amsterdam, he joined them with his family, and with the other Marranos was received back into Judaism. Untroubled by the Dutch burghers, the little community of Israel gradually increased as other Jews, mainly from Portugal, and Spain, joined them, winning favor with their neighbors by their industry and sobriety. These wretched

people who for their religion's sake had long dwelt under the shadow of the sword in their homelands, brought to hospitable little Holland gifts which their tyrants had despised; in time the remnant that Spain had persecuted brought wealth and prosperity to the kingdom which had broken the Spanish yoke and finally succeeded in capturing for Holland a large portion of the lucrative trade with the West Indies. But the story of the Jewish merchants of India and South America does not touch the tale of Maria Nunez; we may follow their adventures some other day after we have listened to the story Maria Nunez told her children's children of that memorable Day of Atonement not long after she had come to dwell in Amsterdam.

"We were still a little afraid of our Christian neighbors," she always began her tale, "for all of us had known the horrors of the rule of the Inquisition, and, although the Dutch were kind and tolerant, we had not yet learned to breathe freely and walk proudly like free people. And so when we first met for our Yom Kippur services in Amsterdam, we did so secretly, fearing at least insult or ridicule from the gentiles who did not understand our ways.

"It was before my dear mother and my younger brother and sister joined us, and I wished with all my heart that they too might know the joy of worshipping God in the solemn fashion our fathers had followed so many years before. But your dear grandfather was with me and his love comforted me a little for their absence, even for the loss of my father who had died in Portugal since my departure

and was never to know the new freedom that his children had found in Holland.

“So we met in secret at the home of Don Samuel Palache, a man of great importance in that day, since he was the ambassador of Morocco to the Netherlands. And the men wore shrouds and praying shawls and slipped into their places quietly, not only because it was a solemn day, but because they felt a great awe that after so many years we Jews might keep our Day of Atonement without fear of the stake. From where I sat with the other women I could see your grandfather’s face, drawn and white. And as he prayed, he often wept; for he also grieved for his dear ones who could never know the freedom that had come to us that day.

“That learned man we met in Emden, Moses Uri, and his son, led us in the services, and when the prayers were chanted I could distinguish the sweet voice of Jacob Israel Belmonte, the poet who had come to us from Madeira. And I remember to this day that it was he who gave the alarm when the armed men burst through the doors and bore down upon us.

“It was a dreadful moment. Many of us had known such things to happen in Spain and Portugal; all of us had heard stories of old men dragged to their deaths from their prayers and little children snatched from their mother’s arms to the baptismal font. We were not cowards—had not many of us braved a hundred deaths to come to Holland where we might be free to worship our God before all men?—but at that moment we thought only of the

horrors of the Inquisition and fled before the soldiers. This was unwise; then they thought certain evil of us and searched our house of prayer with new suspicions in their hearts and afterwards they led our leaders to prison.

“They knew Moses Uri and his son who had directed our Yom Kippur service for honorable men with clean hands; but now the judges accused them of gathering our people in secret meeting for unlawful purposes. Then Jacob Tirado, who could speak to them in the Latin tongue, demanded to know why he and his friends had been seized like common criminals and of what crime they stood accused. He spoke boldly, for he was a proud man and proud of his brethren who had always borne themselves honorably in Amsterdam.

“Then the first of the judges spoke and accused Jacob Tirado and the others of being Catholic conspirators who had met together in secret to plot against the Dutch, lately freed from the rule of Catholic Spain. Yes, he accused our brethren who had suffered so much beneath the rule of the Church, denouncing us as Catholics who had held a secret mass, although he was obliged to confess that the soldiers had found neither crucifix nor sacred wafers when they searched our meeting place.

“But at this Jacob Tirado laughed loudly, yes, into the very faces of his accusers. And he said: ‘Would a lamb, seeing its brothers mangled by the wolf, try to play the wolf if he were once in his own sheepfold?’ And he showed the scars on the bodies of several of our brethren, men who escaped from

the clutches of the Inquisition, and he swore a great oath that he and his brethren were loyal to Holland and had no love for Spain or Portugal in their hearts. 'I speak for these men,' he said, 'and they will bear me out: if you send us back to the hell from which we have escaped, we will throw ourselves into the sea. For if the folk of Holland hate the Inquisition, know that we Jews hate it with even a greater bitterness.'

"So Jacob Tirado convinced the judges that there was no harm in our meeting and the judges dismissed him and the other prisoners with signs of favor. They hurried back to the deserted meeting place, and that night we all assembled just before sundown and concluded our first real Yom Kippur service in Holland. And now we no longer trembled, for we knew that the God of Israel had heard our petitions and would bless His people with peace. As we came out into the streets our neighbors greeted us kindly, and though many of us were faint from fasting our hearts were joyful and we could have sung aloud in our gladness. It all happened a very long time ago, children, but I remember until this day the little child with blue eyes and flaxen hair who smiled up at me as I patted her bright head and gave me a flower from the nosegay she carried. It is withered and scentless now, but once it was beautiful and fragrant, and I laid it away with a lock of my dear mother's hair and the gold chain Queen Elizabeth had placed about my neck and several tokens from your grandfather. . . . All old and of another day,

children, and I am an old woman now who loves to sit by the fire and tell tales of long ago.

“But there is no tale I love so well as that of our first real Yom Kippur in Holland—for on that day we indeed returned to the God of our fathers in the sight of all men and found the right to worship Him in truth and freedom. Two years later we built a beautiful synagogue with the full permission of the authorities, and it was in the place you know, built by pious Jacob Tirado, that I often sat by my good mother’s side after she came to Holland. A fair place, children, but often I long to be worshipping again in the house of Samuel Palache, where we met in secret on Yom Kippur morning long ago.”

SUCCOTH

THE JEWISH THANKSGIVING

Succoth, the great harvest festival of the Jew, suggests by its name the time when the Children of Israel, encamped in the Wilderness, dwelt in tents or booths. Later when the Jewish people dwelt in Palestine it was a custom among the farmers to build rude booths, or succahs, for themselves out in the fields where they might sleep during the harvest season.

The Pilgrim Fathers, when they kept their first Thanksgiving Day in America, no doubt received the idea from their Hebrew bibles which they knew so well. When they set apart a day on which to thank God for His harvest, they must have recalled the ancient pilgrim feasts of our people, the three yearly pilgrimages made to Jerusalem that the farmers might lay their offerings from field and tree upon the altar and thank God for His bounties.

Succoth, the time of the late harvest in Palestine, was a time for general rejoicing. It was incumbent for every male Israelite above the age of thirteen to journey to Jerusalem for the annual celebration; often the women and older children, as well as the servants of the household, journeyed with the master to the city of David, which was so crowded with visitors that many dwelt during their week's stay in booths outside the city's walls. The finest of the harvest was laid upon

the altar ; prayers were offered for rain and dew ; there was a gathering at the brook Kishon for the Feast of the Water Pouring, where water was poured upon the ground, symbolic of the life-giving waters of the rainy season, which began soon after Succoth. Most picturesque of all were the processions of happy pilgrims carrying goodly boughs and willows of the brook, singing their grateful harvest songs.

But during the long period of exile the Jew was not only banished from Palestine, but forbidden to hold land or till the soil in the countries in which he lived as an alien. Still he never forgot the joyous harvest days of Palestine ; in his squalid Ghettoes he reared tiny booths and sang hymns of thanks for a harvest he had never gathered, offered up prayers for rain and dew, although he no longer tilled the soil.

Now the frail succah became a symbol of hope, for the Jew remembered how God had protected his desert-dwelling ancestors in days of old and knew that He would never fail His people ; the roof was left open to the sky that the persecuted and unhappy Children of Israel might look up to the stars and raise their hearts in hope ; for a week they ate in their succah homes, made beautiful with autumn leaves and fruits ; every night they lingered in their traditional refuge to sing their hymns of praise and gratitude for the harvest they had not reaped.

Today the Jew rears his succah in every land—especially in our flourishing agricultural colonies of Palestine—or, if he is a city dweller, he erects a booth in his yard or upon the roof of his tenement or in his synagogue. This succah is decorated with fruits and leaves and flowers and the congregation gather about it to repeat the old harvest prayers and perform one of the

most beautiful ceremonies of the day, the waving of the lulab and esrog (the palm and citron), Palestinian plants, often imported from the Holy Land for this occasion. Sacrificial offerings can no longer be carried to the Temple, but since the Jew has come to believe that charity as well as prayer takes the place of sacrifice, the Succoth offerings are usually distributed among the sick and the needy. Succoth is an occasion of joy for the Jew, so he feels bound to share it with others.

No longer a people without a land, free to reap the harvest they have long celebrated with empty hands, Jews today gather to sing a new song in the Tent of Israel which God has preserved for them through the ages.

SUCCOTH IN WARTIME

O God who crowns the year with good,
Who girds with joy the hills,
Who blesses vineyard, field and wood,
And flocks beside the rills,
(Those cool and shadowy waters, where
Young David used to play!)
O God of Harvest, hear the prayer
Our People raise today!

Who gathers now the golden grain,
A harvest none may reap?
Who herds the flocks across the plain,
Where hungry orphans weep?
Like mourners of all joy stripped bare,
The lonely fruit trees sway:
O God of Harvest, hear the prayer
Our People raise today!

We are a weary folk, O God,
In grief and tears grown old;
Give back the hills our fathers trod,
Their harvest fields of gold;
Return to us their vineyards fair,
That lie so far away:
O God of Harvest, hear the prayer,
Our People raise today!



THE TENT OF ISRAEL

A Story of Succoth in Russia

He had come home from a foreign prison camp, and for a moment the returned soldier imagined that he was still sleeping beside the road and dreaming dreams of his boyhood. More than once during the autumns of those endless centuries of war he had allowed himself for a little space to picture the place of his birth and the simple, lovely festivals of the fall seasons. Oftenest of all, he dreamed of Succoth, with the booths for every family, the fruits glowing amid the green leaves, the white cloth, the festal lights. He heard again the hymns of joy and gratitude to the God of Israel, who even in the darkest hours had granted a tent of refuge to His people. But during the last leaden summer months his sufferings had wiped away all recollections of the place he had once called his home.

Now Simeon stood once more in the place where he had grown to manhood. He had found the spot after hundreds of miles of painful travel, following an unseen trail as surely as a wounded animal that crawls back to its lair to die. He had expected to find a wilderness—and his fears were realized. The Jewish quarter of the city which was his birthplace

had been crossed and recrossed by hostile armies, by war-maddened neighbors till it lay all upturned and broken like a plowed field in the springtime. The house where he had kissed his mother good-bye and whispered farewell to a girl he now shuddered to remember (for why should she have been spared?) lay a heap of huddled stones. He wondered dully, but without suffering, for his tired brain and soul no longer quivered beneath the lash, where the two women rested after the want and terror of the long hard years. And he was glad, very glad, that his old father had died before the war began. He, at least, had escaped the agony which had torn the world asunder.

Simeon stumbled on in the early autumn twilight, wandering aimlessly, for he felt that there was nothing left to seek in the whole world. Here and there a pile of stones or household goods lay scattered and horrible in their decay. Simeon, who had learned to look unmoved on the red ruins of a battlefield, shuddered at the shattered remains of what had once been a cradle; his hand trembled as he picked up from the ground a piece of metal corroded and trampled out of all semblance to a candlestick for the Sabbath. To his broken mind it seemed a horrible thing that these inanimate objects, torn from their old sanctuaries, should suffer the fate of their masters.

Suddenly, he stopped, listened perplexed, and passed his hand across his forehead as a man troubled with an evil dream. Had he again fallen by the wayside to dream of Succoth in a land untroubled

by war? Or did he indeed hear the old hymns of promise and thanksgiving that had haunted him in his exile?

He pressed on feverishly, breathing with difficulty as he saw huddled against a shell-shattered wall a little booth made of branches. It was undecked; no fruit glowed among the green leaves, no festal lights shone forth in gladness. Standing before the low door Simeon saw a little group of Jews, ragged, pale, emaciated. With difficulty he recognized his old neighbors: his uncle's wife, whom he had left a comely young woman, now sharp of feature, with vacant eyes; little Benjamin, her son, a half-grown boy, who kept gazing furtively behind him like a frightened animal; several women; Moses the carpenter; Reb Abraham, the blind old scholar, his long beard sweeping his sunken breast. Simeon gazed on them with fear-widened eyes. They seemed, these old neighbors of his, like horrible figures in a horrible dream. And yet he knew they were alive and that he must speak to them.

"Sholom Aleichem," he said hoarsely, and took a step forward.

The others turned, shrinking in their dreadful, habitual terror. Then Moses the carpenter, came forward and drew him into the hut.

"You are the first of our soldiers to come back," he greeted Simeon, tonelessly.

Simeon clutched his old neighbor's ragged shoulder, struggling for speech. "My mother?" he asked at last, although he knew the answer.

“Dead—hunger. What would you have? She was an old woman.”

Simeon turned his eyes away. There was one more question he must ask, although he feared Moses’ answer more than at first. “And the daughter of Reb Judah?”

“Reb Judah’s bride-maiden? There were soldiers—she flung herself in the river. So did the other maidens.”

A long silence. The soldier was about to take a vacant place at the bare board that served as a table when Moses, the carpenter, drew him from the hut. “He,” pointing to Reb Abraham, “is spared much since he walks in darkness. We have lied to him, for why should he suffer more? Do not undecieve him. And be ready to run with us at the first alarm. Meetings are forbidden, and if the gentiles find us here—” with a hopeless shrug he drew Simeon into the Succah.

“Here is Simeon, son of Reb Asher, the memory of the righteous for a blessing,” he told the blind old man at the head of the table, “just returned from the war.”

“Sholom Aleichem,” greeted the host, indicating a place at his right hand. “You have come back to sit in our Succah. Last year we dared not raise one, but this year, the Holy One, blessed be He, has granted us our tent of refuge. We have no wine, but—” he waved his claw-like hand across the empty board, “but we have a little food.” And Simeon saw that at the old man’s place alone lay several crusts of coarse bread. “And all the rest is as per-

fect as in old days. The lamp which hung in my father's father's Succah," and he pointed to the bare ceiling, "the fruit which a brother in Eretz Yisrael sent Reb Moses and which arrived here safely—by a miracle." His face glowed with joy. "The Holy One, blessed be He, hath not forgotten His people."

"Hush," warned one of the women. "If they should hear us——"

The old man smiled serenely. "We are in His tent of refuge," he answered confidently, "and no harm can come to us. For eight days will we eat and rejoice in our Succah as our fathers did in happier days. For we have again come into our heritage."

Suddenly one of the older women burst into hysterical sobbing. "My son," she moaned. "He went away with you—and he did not return. And my daughter—my bride-maiden."

"Hush!" said the old man, almost sternly. "On this night we are forbidden to weep." His face, white and shrunken, suddenly softened with a great pity. "Do not weep at all for them," he counseled gently, "for it is well with them who died for His holy name. As surely as our fathers who in days of old passed through the flames to proclaim His unity."

But a younger woman, a child in her arms, would not be silenced. "Must we suffer forever?" she cried passionately. "My husband will never return. This child he left a rosy baby will never walk or run about and play. He is not sick; he does not need

medicine—only food. Must we wait forever?" Her words died away in a dreary wailing.

"I heard that soon Jews from America will come with food and clothes for all of us," said the boy Benjamin timidly, his eyes ever fastened fearfully upon the low door.

"America is only another name for God," commented Simeon, and no one checked his blasphemy.

"Come—come," the old blind man raised his hand authoritatively. "Let us go on."

"But sing more softly," cautioned Moses, the carpenter. "If we are discovered——"

The boy Benjamin sprang up trembling. "See," he whispered, "over there beyond the wall. They are coming with lanterns——"

Moses helped the old man to his feet. "Let us go home for tonight, Reb Abraham," he whispered. "Perhaps tomorrow night——" and despite the old man's protests began to guide him to the comparative safety of his own cellar. "And come with us," he invited Simeon.

But Simeon did not answer. In a moment the others had faded into the night, but he remained standing before the low door of the deserted Succah. These others had grown so used to the drab wretchedness of their lives, that they no longer wished even for death. Misery had become their accustomed life. But as for him, a mad look in his eyes, he waited for the gang of hoodlums that bore down upon him.

The Succah lay in ruins and Simeon rested upon the trampled branches, no longer plagued with

dreams. But in his damp cellar the soul of Reb Abraham burned with hope.

“Tomorrow will we eat in our Succah,” he chanted, with something of the singsong glee of a little child. “Ah, the Holy One, blessed be He, hath not deserted us, but hath raised for Israel a tent of refuge even in the wilderness.”

SIMCHATH TORAH

THE REJOICING OVER THE TORAH

Simchath Torah, a minor Jewish holy day, follows immediately after the harvest festival of Succoth. Like Succoth it is a festival of joy, but now the Jew rejoices in the possession of his Torah. For the Torah is more than a religious book to the Jew, more than a Law by which he lives and for which he is willing to die. The Jew may be said to rejoice in his religion, his one consolation in time of exile and persecution. Of all peoples in the world he is the one to thank God not only for the fruits of the earth but for the Law and the literature which God has given him for his guidance.

On Simchath Torah our people finish reading the Torah for the year; but the reader immediately turns back to the beginning and reads the first chapter of Genesis. For, says an ancient legend, if the Evil One saw the Jews rejoicing on Simchath Torah he might sneeringly say: "Behold, the People of the Book are delighted that they have completed their task of reading it!" So, to confound Satan, the Jew begins at once to reread his Torah, making merry because he need never cease his study of the sacred volume.

The life of the Jew in his long exile was so bitter and unhappy that it is easy to understand why he took every opportunity both in the home and the synagogue to find in his religious ceremonies the joy and the merriment

denied him in the world beyond the Ghetto gates. Just as the little child when first carried to the Cheder (Hebrew school) received honey and cakes to teach him the sweetness of the Law, so the older children were allowed to scramble for nuts and sweetmeats on this festal day. Perhaps they enjoyed even more the processional in which even the youngest Cheder pupils were allowed to join. The rabbis and the older men of the congregation led the way, carrying in their arms the scrolls of the Law; then the boys followed, carrying flags of their own design, many of them with lighted candles mounted upon their staves. Down the aisles of the synagogue they passed, the leaders carrying their richly bound scrolls like so many flags, the congregation bending to kiss the holy book as it was borne past.

During the hard years of the World War hundreds of Jewish communities in Europe were literally uprooted and the wandering people were driven forth to wander hopelessly through an alien and antagonistic world. Again and again the little procession of refugees was led by its rabbi, carrying close to his breast the Flag of Judah, the Sefer Torah, brought from the deserted synagogue as the greatest treasure of Israel. Many of these scrolls were carried to the larger Jewish centers like Warsaw and deposited in one of the synagogues for safe-keeping, to rest there until the warring nations would declare peace and allow the Jewish exiles to gather together again for the worship of their God.

In the dreadful days of disease and famine that followed the war, a traveler from America visited a Jewish community in Poland. The place was almost destroyed, the houses burned, the people starving. An old man approached the American and begged him for help.

"Tell the rich people in America they must help us,"

said the old rabbi. "Tell them not to send us food and clothing first, because we are used to starving and freezing. But beg the Jews in America to send us money to rebuild our school and our synagogue. We can wait a little while longer for bread, but if we do not have the bread of the Torah we will die."

He spoke as one of the People of the Book, a people who, while they dream of peace, fight for their flag which has outlived the thrones of all their ancient persecutors, their Sefer Torah.

SIMCHATH TORAH



*It was good to give thanks to the Lord
For the sun and the rain,
For the corn and the wine He bestowed,
For the golden-wreathed grain:
But now as the festal week ends,
'Neath the palms that we wave,
We cry thanks to the Giver of Good
For the Torah He gave.*



*For the Law of the Lord it is good,
And His precepts are right:
The simple of heart He makes wise;
His commandments bring light;
More goodly His words than fine gold,
Ay, a treasure to save;
'And we thank with rejoicing our God
For the Torah He gave.*

*O harvesters, rich in your spoils,
Not alone by the bread
Which we win by the sweat of our brows
Are the sons of dust fed;
Nay, we live by the words of His mouth,
And 'neath palms that we wave,
We cry thanks to the Giver of Good
For the Torah He gave.*



THE FLAG OF MY PEOPLE *

A Story of Simchath Torah in Russia

Suddenly I remembered that the next day would be Simchath Torah. I was cold and wet and hungry; as I lay shivering among the old men and half grown boys, who had thrown themselves down in the rank grass beside the road to spend the night, I thought of the way we used to celebrate Simchath Torah in our own little town before the war came to us. Half asleep, I seemed to see again our old synagogue and the men swaying in their *taletchim* (praying shawls) and the little boys marching with bright flags. I remembered how once I had made a bright green and red one for poor little Reuben, my brother. I thought, too, of the joy in old Rabbi Yossel's wrinkled face as he raised the Torah in its beautiful crimson wrappings. But now those wrappings were stained with mud and rain, and Rabbi Yossel lay beside me, his arms about the Scroll, as he sobbed in his weariness and grief, but softly, for he was an old man and very tired.

We were never quite sure what had caused the

* During the World War it was observed again and again that groups of refugee Jews carried their Torah with them into exile.

war. Not even my father knew; but he and all the strong men of our town marched to the front when the order came. That made it hard for mother. It had always been difficult to get food for all of us children, even when father was with us; now there were many fast days, and my little brothers often cried because they were hungry.

All this was hard enough, but at least we had a roof over our heads. Then the order came that by nightfall we would have to leave our homes. My mother had always been a quick, lively woman. She had managed the affairs of the shop when father was away; she could think and give orders as well as any man. But now she seemed stunned and bewildered and could not do anything for herself nor tell me what to do. Perhaps it was because she was weak and ill, for my little sister was only a few days old, and mother had not been able to leave her bed until the order came to gather up our household things by evening. Now she sat half-dressed on the bed with the baby in her lap and my little brothers sitting on the floor near her. David had his finger in his mouth and seemed puzzled because mother didn't say anything, but just stared ahead and did not even cry. After a while she picked out a few things for me to make into a bundle, some shawls and coats to keep the children warm, and the little food we had in the house. Once she cried; it was when I told her that it would make our pack too heavy if we carried her wedding linen. Mother had been very proud of that linen. She used to show it to the neighbor women when they came to see her.

She would never sell it no matter how poor we were; now she cried to leave it behind.

I can't tell much about what happened after sunset. The soldiers drove us through the streets and it was horrible to hear the women and children screaming as we hurried to get away. As we passed the synagogue, Rabbi Yossel staggered through the door. He carried the Scroll in his arms; he would allow no one else to carry it although it must have been very heavy for such a feeble old man. He carried nothing for himself—not even an extra cloak—only his *talith* and his Torah. There was a man in town, Jacob the blacksmith, whom I had been taught to avoid as an Epikuros for he used to mock at holy things and the ways of our people. They did not take Jacob for the army because he was lame; so now he limped along with all of us homeless Jews, although we had never thought of him as a real Jew before. When it began to rain he took off his leather jacket and made Rabbi Yossel put it on. The Rabbi wrapped it around the Scroll and blessed Jacob for helping protect the Torah. Jacob grew red and muttered in his beard as he limped on, the rain beating upon his shivering shoulders.

When we looked back the sky was red for our town was already in flames. Some of the women prayed and wept and one of them laughed madly and clapped her hands to see the fire. It was now quite dark and we did not know to what place we were bound; we only knew that we must tramp along the muddy roads until the soldiers told us we could rest. At last they did order us to halt for the night, and

we threw ourselves down beside the road and tried to sleep. I shall never forget that night.

In the morning I found myself at Rabbi Yossel's side. He did not walk with the other old men, but with the women who carried their household goods and their children. Once he smiled a little, and, pointing to his Scroll, said: "See, I am carrying my child too!" I remembered then that my mother had once told me how Rabbi Yossel's wife had borne him one "kaddish," but that the boy had died in his fourth year. I was glad at that moment that the rabbi's wife and little child were resting beside my old grandparents in the Jewish cemetery. For the war could never make them unhappy.

It was about noontime when we saw some soldiers, their bayonets glistening in the sun, a beautiful flag waving at the head of their procession. When I looked at them sitting so proudly upon their horses, and then glanced down at our miserable line of weak women and old men dragging themselves through the mud, I felt my heart would burst with shame. Here was I, almost thirteen and a man, yet I could not raise a hand to protect my mother who limped behind me, a frozen look of terror upon her white face.

"Rabbi Yossel," I told him, "it is the fault of men like my father and you and all the Jews of the world that we must suffer like this. (I know that I should not have spoken so to our old Rabbi, but at that moment I felt that I would die unless I told someone what was in my heart.) Those men ride out to protect their homes and their mothers; men like my father and uncle go to help fight their battles for

them; but what reward will come to us? See my father! He will not find a home when he returns. And what can I do to help my mother? If she is trampled by the horses as Simon's mother was last night, can I raise a hand to save her? These other people at least have a country to fight for—and a flag. But we have nothing."

"My son," answered Rabbi Yossel, "we have a country and some day it will please the Holy One, blessed be He, to lead us back to it in joy. And have you forgotten that today is Simchath Torah—the day of thanksgiving for our flag?" And he raised the Torah that he carried.

"If it is our flag, why don't we fight for it?" I cried bitterly.

He waved a trembling hand toward the line of broken women and old men who followed us. "We are fighting for our Torah today," he said gently; "we are following our flag. When the old soldiers like me pass away, you and the other youths will carry the flag for us. There have been many nations, my son, who went to war on horses and carried swords and waving flags. But where are they today? They have been swept away forever, but Israel remains, and will remain until all the nations of the earth will lay aside their swords and come beneath Israel's flag." His wrinkled face glowed with a strange light. His lips moved, and though he spoke softly, I caught the Hebrew words, "In that day, God will be known as One, and His name be One."

I am glad he spoke to me like that and I will

always cherish his words. Two days later when Rabbi Yossel died on the roadside, I took the Torah in my arms and carried it for the rest of our journey. Whenever I became tired I remembered that I carried the flag of my people and it gave me strength, strength for the rest of the journey, even after my mother died. Several of our neighbors took my little brothers and sisters before they were sent to different parts of the country. I lost sight of them and I have never seen them to this day.

My father died in the war, fighting for a flag that was not his own. But perhaps I shall be able to serve the flag which Rabbi Yossel gave me on Simchath Torah.

CHANUKAH

THE FEAST OF LIGHTS

Chanukah is the mid-winter festival of the Jewish people. In early times the Jew, like other people living in a primitive or half-civilized state, rejoiced to see the return of the longer days during December. Living in their frail shelters which scarcely protected them against the biting cold, ancient peoples learned to dread the freezing months of famine and darkness. When the winter solstice came they celebrated the hope of warm and bright days by building great bonfires like so many tiny suns blazing on earth; some celebrations consisted of torchlight processions. Then the German people and later their descendants in England and America feasted, burning tapers upon pine trees, and burning great Yule logs to celebrate their mid-winter or Yuletide feast.

For ages the Jewish people have ushered in their Feast of Lights with tiny tapers flashing in the Menorah. But to the Jew the festival is more than a celebration of the victory of light over darkness; Chanukah spells to his mind the triumph of right over evil, the worship of the one God superseding the pagan beliefs of the nations which have persecuted the Jew. It has become more than a nature holiday; it is the memorial feast of the first heroes and martyrs who ever died for religious liberty.

The Maccabees who fought upon the battlefield and

the no less heroic Hannah and her sons, types of unnumbered nameless Jews of their day, were the very first men and women in the history of the world who were willing to suffer for the sake of their religion. Rejecting the sensuous pagan worship forced upon them by their Syrian conqueror, Antiochus, the Jews waged a long and unequal war against their oppressors, at the end reentering in triumph the Temple at Jerusalem which the Syrians had polluted with their heathen ceremonies.

Then they celebrated the first feast of Chanukah—or rededication. The soldiers cleansed the Temple, which was garlanded and decorated for the great day of rejoicing. But no oil, save that polluted by the enemy, could be found to light the sacred Menorah. Messengers were immediately sent to procure pure oil, but meanwhile a cruse of oil, still sealed and unpolluted, was discovered in the Temple. The Menorah was lighted and burned for eight whole days until the messengers returned with fresh oil. Today the Feast of Chanukah is eight days long in memory of the miracle of the little cruse of oil and the first feast of rededication.

Every year at Chanukah the Jew lit a Menorah in his window that the whole world might know of his ancient victory; the first night only one candle was lighted, the second two, and so on until the whole eight burned together with their servant light, the Shammas; for, said the rabbis, the lights must be kindled in increasing order as the Jew should increase in holiness. Often there were torchlight processions, while in Venice the gondolas of the Jews were decorated with lanterns in honor of the feast.

Today Jewish boys and girls keep their mid-winter

feast of light at approximately the same time as their Christian playmates celebrate their Christmas holidays. Instead of a lighted Christmas tree, Jewish children kindle the tapers in their Menorahs, many of them of beautiful design, such as the craftsmen of the Middle Ages fashioned for their people. Some of us treasure Menorahs wrought in the Bezalel School in Palestine, where today Jewish artists again dream of serving their people even as a beauty-loving lad did long ago in far-away Prague when he designed the Menorah of Remembrance.



JOSEPH'S CANDLE

*We lit the lights for Chanukah,
Sister and Son and I;
'Twas twilight and the baby stars
Were peeping from the sky.*

*Said little Sister as she watched
Her candle's yellow flare:
"I wonder if our Joseph keeps
A Chanukah up there."*

*Son's eyes shone clear as taper's
light:*

*"Why, brother isn't far.
It's Chanukah in heaven now
And Joseph lights his star!"*



THE MENORAH OF REMEMBRANCE

A Story of Chanukah in Bohemia

The neighbors of old Rabbi Samuel sometimes doubted his piety for he was so unlike the other pious Jews who lived huddled together in Prague's narrow ghetto hundreds of years ago. True, he was a man of great learning and even those who criticized him the most never hesitated to go to him when puzzled over a ritual question; he kept all the commandments, the fast days and the holydays; his hand was always stretched out to the poor and needy. Yet he often strayed away into a world of his own making and those who knew and loved him best could not help but look upon him as something of a stranger and a sinner in Israel.

Those were bitter days for the sons of Israel; they knew the bitterness of dwelling in a strange land, surrounded by those of another faith, who, if they did not hate them, did not understand the Jews, and refused to think of them as brothers. So they lived more and more apart from the rest of the world; not only the heavy ghetto gates shut them off from their Christian neighbors of the city of Prague; a hundred different laws and customs made

friendship between the two people seem an impossible thing to everyone except such dreamers as old Rabbi Samuel and later his little grandson, Sholem.

For Rabbi Samuel was a man with a heart large enough to love the whole world, even those who hated him and his people. He loved not only men, but even the stray dogs which followed him down the street whenever he walked abroad as though they divined his friendship, even the shy brown birds that nested in the eaves and the flowers that grew in the fields beyond the ghetto in the springtime. He called these creatures of the sky and earth his little brothers; some said he actually talked to the birds and understood their language as Solomon, the wise king, had done in days long ago.

The old man used to take his grandson on his walks through the fields and forests and talk to him of many things. Sholem was the son of Rabbi Samuel's daughter who had died when he was still a very small child; soon his father had followed her and the boy had gone to live with his grandfather in the little book-lined room the learned Rabbi called his home. It was just like so many other ghetto rooms, dark and dingy, with Hebrew books along the walls; but on the table stood a vessel filled with field flowers as long as the summer lasted, and near the window a wood-bird sang from its twisted willow cage.

One day when Sholem was only five years old he sat by the table rolling between his hands a bit of clay he had picked from the roadside. Suddenly he ran to his grandfather and laid upon his lap a deli-

cately wrought flower—such a flower as those in the earthen vessel before him. “Grandfather,” he said in a voice that sounded a little frightened, “I can make flowers—see!” and pointed to the little flower of clay.

For a moment the old man said nothing. He knew the horror pious Jews of his day felt for what they considered the arts of the heathen; not only did they remember the Biblical command to refrain from making images, but they associated all statues and pictures with the figures and paintings which filled the churches of their persecutors or adorned their palaces. Yet Rabbi Samuel did not have it in his heart to order the boy to destroy the beautiful thing he had made.

He only bade him put it away and not to boast of his skill to his fellows in the Cheder, lest his teacher punish him for creating forbidden objects. And the next day when the boy modeled the wood-bird that sang near the window and brought it for his grandfather to see, the old man instead of reproving and warning him, praised him for his work. For it was really beautiful and Rabbi Samuel, although a learned and pious Jew, loved all beautiful things and could not despise the artist’s gift that God had bestowed upon little Sholem.

Again he bade the boy keep his skill a secret; but he encouraged him to model all the beautiful things he saw about him when they walked past the ghetto gates into the sunshine of the open fields. He taught the boy to notice the beauty of the white mountains of clouds that floated above their heads, the dignity

of the great trees, their many-colored leaves. At night he often bade him come to the window to look at the soft beauty of the moon or the radiance of the shining stars, until the boy loved beauty more than anything else in the world and longed with all his heart to catch the fleeting loveliness of the things he saw about him and imprison them forever in the clay he could shape so skilfully.

But when Sholem was almost thirteen, a chance boast made to some schoolfellow betrayed him. He was summoned before the elders of his people and ordered to bring forth the images he had made. And when these pious men in Israel saw what he had done they destroyed all the lovely forms Sholem had created and threatened him with punishment if he should again transgress the Law.

For days Sholem mourned and could not be comforted. But his gentle old grandfather at last devised a plan which should not offend the elders, yet would bring peace to the boy's troubled spirit. He took Sholem to Michael the goldsmith and bade him teach the boy his trade. Sholem proved a docile scholar, and, almost before he was aware that his pupil had outstripped the master, Michael was entrusting to the lad his choicest commissions, candlesticks for the Sabbath and cups for the wine of blessing and great silver plates to be used on the Seder table. For the boy was a true artist and once having learned to work with metal instead of clay he was able to devise objects of rare beauty; now he no longer feared to speak of his art, for it was praised from one end of the ghetto to the other, and the

most pious Jews used the work of his hands when they served God in their homes or in the synagogue.

Now it happened that when Rabbi Samuel was but a youth, a nobleman of Prague had done him a great wrong. Strange to tell, instead of laughing at the pain and dishonor he had brought to a despised Jew, the nobleman, perhaps touched by Samuel's gentle spirit, had given him a rich gift as though seeking to erase with gold the memory of his insult. Rabbi Samuel had continued to live in uncomplaining poverty, often sharing his last crust with one poorer than he. But he never touched the nobleman's gold for himself nor even gave it away as alms. Perhaps he felt it was so dishonored that not even the gratitude of those who received his bounty could take away its stain.

He was now a very old man, too feeble to leave his bed even to go to the synagogue, but he did not need to touch the almost forgotten hoard to supply his wants, for Sholem, now a youth of eighteen, was the master of his trade and did all he could to bring his grandfather comfort in his last days. At last Rabbi Samuel grew so feeble that he no longer raised his head; sometimes he lay for hours like one who sleeps and Sholem, watching over him, often feared he would never wake. But one day at sunset the old scholar opened his eyes and smiled upon the boy.

"I am going to die," he told Sholem, "and I am not sorry, for I have lived a long time and all those I love, save you, have gone before me." His eyes

wandered through the little window toward a bit of sunset sky he could just glimpse over the high roofs of the neighboring houses. "The world has been very beautiful to me," he said at last, and he recited the prayer written for the pious Jew who sees something lovely in God's universe and thanks Him for His goodness. Then his eyes wandered to the earthen vessel upon the table; it was filled with bright yellow flowers and leaves gay with the tints of autumn. "Everything has been so beautiful," he said, "so very beautiful, but I could only look upon the skies and fields, yet did not have the power to show others—except you!—how beautiful God has made His world. I was not an artist and I could not make anything beautiful to live long after I myself am dead."

Then—pausing often because of his weakness—he told Sholem of the gold the nobleman had given him so long ago that its existence had grown to be little more than a legend of the ghetto. "I have never spent one coin," said Rabbi Samuel, "and if you love me as a son should love a father I trust that you will keep none of the accursed gold for yourself. Yet with it you and I will build ourselves a monument much fairer than any yonder in the House of Life (the cemetery) to which they will soon carry me. We will glorify not ourselves but God—we will give His beauty to the men who come to the synagogue and find beauty in His holy teachings but not in the world He has created for their sakes. I would do this for my brethren because I love them. Yea, I have loved all men, even the

nobleman who wronged me so bitterly in my youth; I will return good for his evil and the gold that he gave me will cause those he has never seen to bless him for his gift."

"What would you have me do, grandfather?" asked Sholem.

Then the old man told him how he could lay hands on the gold. "Go and purchase with it any materials you desire," he commanded, "the finest, as though you would fashion a king's crown. And make a Menorah for our synagogue and put into it your whole soul, all the beauty you would have wrought into your statues and images had you been born among the heathen. Do not hasten and spoil your work; but if it is done by Chanukah I shall be well pleased. Then have it placed before the altar of our synagogue and when our people see the eight lights in their golden sockets their hearts will be uplifted through the beauty you and I have given them and they will praise God with all their souls."

So the old rabbi told Sholem and a little later he died. And as soon as the days of mourning were over, Sholem went into Prague and spent the nobleman's gold on all the gold and fine metals his heart desired; after that he neither came to the workshop of Michael the goldsmith to help him at his trade, nor did he take time to hold speech with his friends; and although he worked late into the night he often rose before dawn. White, haggard, sleepless, yet happier than he had ever been before, Sholem put his whole life's craving for beauty into the Menorah that he made as his grandfather had

commanded him. He worked like a man under the whip of a taskmaster, for he had resolved that by Chanukah he would place it upon the altar of the synagogue.

The Menorah became the talk of the entire ghetto; its fame spread even beyond the ghetto walls and the merchant men of Prague who met the Jews in the market place began to gossip of the candlestick which rumor held to be worth a king's ransom. Some said it was adorned with jewels; others whispered that Rabbi Samuel had possessed secret wisdom and had bequeathed his witchcraft to his grandson, empowering Sholem to endow the Menorah with magic properties. So the wildest rumors spread, but Sholem did naught to deny them, for he was too busy with his Menorah.

In Prague dwelt three men, soldiers of fortune, men who had often sold their swords and their honor for gold and feared neither the law of man nor the vengeance of God. And these ruffians, hearing of the Menorah which was shortly to be placed in the synagogue where Rabbi Samuel had worshipped for so many years, planned between themselves to steal it and sell it either for its precious material or to some art-loving duke or prince. So just before Chanukah they secreted themselves in the ghetto before the heavy gates were closed, and while the Jews of Prague were sleeping crept into Sholem's house.

A single taper burned in Sholem's room, but tonight the dim light was ample for the artist, for his work was over. Upon the table stood a great Meno-

rah, curiously wrought with the symbols of Israel, the shield which is David's and the two lions and a scroll work of vines such as hung above the door of the great Temple at Jerusalem. And before the unlighted Menorah stood Sholem, weak from fasting and want of sleep, white and wan as a man who sees visions. Then he turned from surveying the work into which he had put his soul and looked into the faces of the three who stood before him with drawn daggers.

Perhaps he never dreamed of resisting them, for he was as gentle as his grandfather had been. He only threw his arms about the Menorah and held it close as a mother would protect her child. When they pulled him away, he did not strike back; only lay very still upon the floor while the bird in the willow cage at the window, wakened by the noise, broke into frightened chirping.

One of the robbers bent over the prostrate man and turned him over roughly; he drew back in terror. Sholem had fasted too long, had worked too unceasingly; the shock and the sudden terror had been too much for his tired heart and he was dead.

The three who had so often looked on death and violence stood afraid, for they remembered strange tales of the marvelous Menorah and the dead man who had made it. One put out his hand to touch the huge candlestick; then drew back afraid. Hardly daring to breathe they stole down the winding stairs and left the artist and his life-work together.

Those who found Sholem in the morning marveled at the manner of his death. But one of the

robbers, being hanged shortly after for conspiracy, confessed among his other crimes that he had been one of the three who sought to rob the Jews of their treasure. So from that day no man in Prague dared even to think of laying his hands upon the Menorah which Sholem had made.

It was placed before the altar and every Chanukah pious hands lighted it with the festal candles which tell of the Maccabees and their struggle against the Greeks. And every year just before the Feast of Lights two tall tapers are burned in that synagogue, from the sunset prayer far into the night. They are the Yahrzeit, or memorial lights, which recall to memory the lives of Rabbi Samuel and Sholem, his grandson, who gave the Menorah to the great synagogue of Prague.

PURIM

THE FEAST OF LOTS

Purim, which is said to have derived its name from the Persian word Pur, meaning a lot, is a carnival holiday of the Jewish year. Although it is a minor holiday, it is one of the most widely and heartily celebrated of all the festivals. Adopting many features of the boisterous carnivals of the European nations among which the Jews were scattered, the day became a time for merry-making and revelry; no matter how oppressed and embittered the lot of the Jew in exile, he could still laugh and frolic like a child on Purim.

Purim commemorates the deliverance of the Jews when as exiles in Persia they were threatened with destruction by their arch-enemy, Haman, the favorite of the king. But due to the loyalty of the Jew, Mordecai, and the bravery of his cousin, Esther, the Jews were saved while Haman suffered the very fate he had planned for his foe. But it is not only the story of the Persian deliverance that Purim recalls to the student of Jewish history; again and again has the Jew faced destruction, and again and again has a deliverer arisen to save him from death. Esther pleading before the king for her despised and helpless people becomes the prototype of the undying devotion of the Jew who is willing to risk all for his people.

But although a feature of the Purim celebration is

the reading of the Megilla (scroll) of Esther in the synagogue, the greater part of the festival is given over to merry-making. Even the synagogue service is robbed of its decorum and in many cases the small boys write the name of Haman upon their shoe-soles and stamp loudly and shake rattles whenever his name or the names of his wicked sons are read during the narrative. Many merry songs have been composed for this holiday, and for once the Jew forgets his usual sobriety and permits unlimited drinking at the Seudah (banquet).

In the Middle Ages one of the features of the carnival was a great bonfire over which Haman was burned in effigy, a custom reflected in the quaint ginger-bread Hamans and Hamantaschen (three-cornered cookies) which are still baked on Purim. Gifts (Shalach Monos) were exchanged among friends and alms distributed among the poor. During the carnival men and women were allowed to change garments with each other; masked and in grotesque garments they went merry-making through the streets. Often a group of these maskers performed a rude, impromptu Purimspiel, telling the story of the holiday in burlesque form. In most of these sketches Haman ceased to be the terrible villain of the Bible narrative and became little more than a blundering clown whose plans were always defeated.

This custom of presenting Purim plays has never died out and until this day Jewish children retell in their make-believe characters the heroic story of their ancestors. Purim may be said to be the players' holiday; for its story is but a type of the colorful drama Israel has presented with simple heroism upon every stage of the history of the world.

UNMASKED!

*Too long hath Israel wandered in disguise,
A Purim player in a ragged cloak;
His shoulders cringing 'neath the ageless yoke
Of universal torments, hatreds, lies!
Furtive, and fleeing as a coward flies,
While mocking enemies their judgment spoke:
"The lamp is quenched, the sword of Judah broke,
And Israel in his ruined Temple dies."*

*Now Israel with laughing flings aside
The beggar's rags and shows himself a king;
Upon the earth's high places may he ride,
His ancient valleys in young triumph sing;
The age-long, hateful masquerade is o'er:
The beggar rules from Zion's hill once more.*



THE PURIM PLAYERS

A Story of Purim in Germany

The little daughter of the house sat with her hands folded in her lap, her eyes diligently studying the pattern of the wool flowers worked upon her black apron, taking no part in the conversation of her elders. She was a slim girl of fifteen, with heavy, dark braids and thoughtful eyes, a child who flushed modestly when a stranger spoke to her, a shy little maiden who sometimes fell a-dreaming as she moved about her household tasks. She was very glad to rest now while she sat and listened to her elders in respectful silence as a well-bred Jewish daughter was taught to do in those far-off-days, before Heine penned his love lyrics and Napoleon thundered across the world. For she was very tired. She had helped her mother clean the house for Yomtov until it fairly shone; there had been poppy seed mixture to prepare and pastry to bake and baskets to fill for one's neighbors and the poor. Now, wearing her best dress of warm scarlet and the little black satin apron worked with woolen flowers, she sat primly near her parents, half wishing she might frolic once more with her two young brothers and little cousins who were romping in the kitchen. But Reba remembered

that she was quite grown up, a bride-maiden, in fact; and a girl who is considered old enough to be married should prefer to listen to her father jesting with Uncle Heinrich rather than steal Hamantaschen from the pantry or whirl a foolish Dreidel. Besides, her father had ordered the Purim players to perform for his guests that very afternoon and she was to see her first real Purim play. Not a silly Purimspiel played by her brothers and the other Cheder boys dressed in their mother's old clothes, but a real drama given by actors from Frankfort. She sent a glance of shy admiration toward her father—no wonder he held his head so high and talked so loudly. The most influential Jew of the community—after the rabbi, of course—and rich enough to send for the Frankfort Purim players!

Across from Reba sat her cousin Jacob, her senior by about a year, a thin, stooped lad with peering, shortsighted eyes. When Reba had last seen her cousin he was only seven, a laughing, merry rogue who had run races with her and stolen cherries from her father's garden. Now he seemed a stranger, very much older than her twelve-year-old brother, a half-grown man who stammered when he spoke her name. Perhaps she was in awe of him because Uncle Heinrich had boasted so loudly of his son's standing in the Yeshibah of his native town; Jacob, he said, had a head of iron; if every Jew sucked up learning like Jacob (as a hungry child takes the breast, said Uncle Heinrich), the Messiah would not be so long in coming. At which Reba's own father had nodded approvingly, adding that any man might

consider even a liberal dowry too small for such a son-in-law. Another time—perhaps before Uncle Heinrich returned home, they would discuss the matter; this, with a side-long glance at Reba, who flushed burningly beneath his kindly smiling eyes. For she had heard her mother gossiping to the neighbors of a “fine match” and her brothers had teased her a little about Jacob.

Waiting for the Purim players and thinking of her father’s meaningful glance, Reba felt hot with shame, although she did not know why. She knew all Jewish girls married if they were good and virtuous and their fathers were able to give them dowries. And she realized that she was a little girl no longer; her own mother had gone under the canopy before she was fifteen. But standing on the threshold of life, the girl grew afraid. There were her household tasks, her visits and walks with her girl friends, hours with her mother over needlework, her little room with its narrow bed and the white curtains at the window. How could she bear to change all this for the unknown thing they called marriage—cutting off her hair and sitting with the married women instead of the young girls and growing shrill-voiced and ever anxious like her mother. She patted her long, dark braids and shivered a little.

Reba started half guiltily from her day-dreaming as a shout from the kitchen told her the Purim Players had come. Now she was a little girl again and wanted to join her brothers that she might see the strange guests at once; she half rose, but her mother shook her head with a frown and Reba sank

back into her chair. But her cheeks flushed with excitement and her hands plucked nervously at the gay flowers embroidered on her little black apron, for she was impatient for the play to begin.

Now some of the neighbors entered, all in their holiday clothes, all somewhat boisterous with the wine and merriment of the merriest of Jewish festivals, as they slipped into the chairs Reba and her mother placed for them. The women looked her over with frank approval and several of them loudly complimented Reba's mother on her fine bride-maiden. Reba knew that Jacob heard them also and felt his abstracted, shortsighted eyes upon her. She turned almost as scarlet as the ribbon bound about her glossy braids and was glad when a pounding at the door announced that the players had donned their robes and were ready to enter the room.

They came prancing upon the stage, the great rug with its circle of eager spectators. There was a king in all the glory of his scarlet robe and shining crown; and Haman, now terrible and haughty in his rage, and now playing foolish tricks which made the audience roar with laughter; and Esther, a slender youth in a trailing, purple gown and long veil, very lady-like with his mincing steps and high voice. And there was Mordecai. . . .

The Purim Players told the old story in a new way. Ahasuerus forgot he was a mighty king long enough to sing a merry song; Haman ceased plotting as he rattled off a string of foolish stories and tried to shame the company with his wit, jesting now with

this one and now with that, even telling the rabbi he had seen a much longer and finer beard than his in Frankfort. And the rabbi laughed as heartily as the rest, for it was Purim when even the old and the wise are merry and a Jew forgets to be sorrowful. Then Esther danced as gracefully as any maiden in spite of his entangling purple train; growing suddenly serious to listen to the pleading of Mordecai. And then there was Mordecai. . . .

For days afterwards Reba's little brothers bragged to their mates in Cheder of the glories of the king's robes and Haman's pompous strutting and his comic songs. But Reba never spoke of the play to any one—not even to Jacob, whom she married. Though in the hard days that followed Purim, the girl had only to close her eyes to see the face of the lad who played Mordecai, a graceful, full-lipped boy with a rich voice. She did not know whether he played well or ill, she was too lost in dreams to follow his high-flown phrases. She just looked upon his face and the flower of her girlhood unfolded and she was a woman. Her vague dreams throbbed with life. She had never read a novel or heard a light love song; but suddenly she understood why Rachel in the old story had been willing to follow her lover into a distant land. There was a strange throbbing in her throat; she felt it swelling against the gold chain her uncle had brought her for a Purim gift.

While the guests applauded, Reba followed the maid servant into the kitchen. She helped her serve the players with cakes and wine, she stood wistfully

by when her little brothers and cousins crowded about the strangers, examining their robes, begging them for stories of their adventures. The players were only too willing to talk and their stories held the youngsters spellbound; and he who had played Mordecai talked oftenest of all, telling brave stories of great cities and lonely forests, of country fairs and king's palaces they had passed in their journeys.

"I'd like to be a Purim player!" cried the youngest cousin, and the others laughed. All but Reba. She said nothing. It would not have seemed modest for her to talk with these strange men; even though she was silent, she feared that at any moment her mother would call to her to join the older guests. But a strange look came into her dreamy eyes and she saw herself wandering along the sun-flecked roads with this boy player in a new world far away from household cares and cramped corners. And she would go barefoot as her little brothers did in summer and never, never cut her hair. Her mother called her, rather sharply, and she hurried into the other room. Jacob still sat with the older folks. He did not look as though he had cared for the Purim play.

When Reba married Jacob she was too busy with her house and sewing and the children to dream any longer. And when she had an idle moment now and then she used to sit with folded hands, her eyes upon her apron, thinking of nothing. She had forgotten how to dream, so she never wove any more foolish stories about the lad who played Mordecai. If you had told her that, coming to her when he did,

he had meant youth and love and romance, she would have looked a little puzzled—and, maybe, a little shamed. For what has a virtuous Jewish woman to do with romance—even on Purim, when everything is topsy-turvy and one is allowed to be a little foolish!

PASSOVER

THE FEAST OF FREEDOM

Passover, the spring festival of the Jewish people, celebrates at the same time the birth of a free nation and the return of spring. The Jew, like all other people close to the soil, celebrates the coming of the spring season after the winter's cold; the Greek in his festivals to commemorate the return of Persephone to Demeter, the Earth Mother; the early Saxon in his holiday in honor of the goddess of spring, Oestra, whose name has come down to us in the Christian feast of Easter. At this last festival, the egg from which the live chicken was to come, symbolic of the birth of living vegetation from the frozen ground, became a symbol of resurrection and survives today in the Easter egg. For the same reason the egg was used to represent the sacrificial offering at the Temple in earlier days and is still used at the Passover feast of the Jew.

In the earliest times it is very probable that the spring festivals of the Jew were extremely simple, perhaps nothing more than village dances and songs and rural merry-making at the sheep-shearing. Later, in the time of the kings, it became obligatory for every male to go up to Jerusalem with his wheat offering, and Passover became the first of the three great pilgrim feasts, when the farmers of Palestine traveled in gala procession with their families and their servants that they might eat their paschal lamb within the walls of the City of David.

But Passover is more than a celebration of the passing of winter into spring; the Jew sees in the holiday an everlasting memorial of the miracle whereby his people passed from slavery into freedom. Under their shepherd leader, Moses, a slave nation left their shackles behind them and journeyed forth to find the Promised Land; no longer slaves to Pharaoh, they pledged themselves to serve the God who had granted them life and freedom. And Moses laid upon them the commandment that they should never forget the miracles wrought for their deliverance; as they stood with their staves in their hands gathered about their tables to eat the paschal lamb for the first Passover feast, he bade them repeat the ceremonial meal year after year, that the children of Israel might gather every Passover to learn anew the story of their escape from the land of bondage.

And so year after year the Seder is repeated in the Jewish home, the symbols upon the table each commemorative of the ancient story. The Matzah speaks of the unleavened bread the fugitives prepared in their haste, the Charoses of the mortar made by the weary Hebrew slaves, the bitter herbs of the bitterness of slavery. Prominent upon the table is a large goblet filled with wine for Elijah the prophet, who, legend tells, visits every Jewish home on Passover eve and for whom the door is left open; although it is more than likely that the open door often signified welcome not only for the Jew too poor to enjoy a Seder of his own but even for the Jew who had renounced his Judaism, yet felt drawn back to his people on this sacred festival of freedom and longed to return to them as a guest at the Passover table.



THE HILLS ABOUT JERUSALEM

*Passover, 1918, after the Deliverance by
the British Army*

*The hills about Jerusalem,
God's sentinels are they
To guard the place of David
And keep her foes away.*

*When spring was fair in Palestine,
Our fathers came of yore
To keep the ancient Paschal feast—
But now they come no more.*

*The hills about Jerusalem,
They saw our pain and shame,
As to the place of David
Our mocking foemen came.*

*Our city lay all desolate,
Gone was our Temple's pride;
Yet, "Next year in Jerusalem,"
With broken hearts we cried.*

*The centuries passed; our Seder cups
Were salt with exile tears,
And yet we smiled, "Jerusalem!"
Through all the bitter years.*

*The hills about Jerusalem,
At last they see the day,
When messengers of God ride forth
To take her shame away.*

*We cross our hills that longed for us
Through all the exiled years:
And, "This year in Jerusalem,"
We murmur through our tears.*



THE UNWELCOME GUEST

A Story of Passover in Bohemia

Spring came very late that year. In all the city of Prague no man remembered so cold an April, an April of chill winds and little sunshine, even flurries of snow that toward sunset grew into a steady downfall, covering the shivering trees and hushing the narrow streets with a soft, white blanket. Courtiers and market people and ragged beggars, meeting in the great market place of the city, swore that never had there been such a spring time; behind the high gates of the ghetto, the Jews, who had just swept and purified their houses for the Passover, warmed their hands before their grateful fires ere they donned their white garments and sat down at the Seder table to keep the ancient feast of their fathers.

The poor folks among the ghetto dwellers, and there were many (for the days were cruel days for the Jew, and many knew not how to earn their bread because of the hard laws which met them at every turn), shivered in their rags or the garments some generous soul had given them in honor of the festival. But they knew that on one night at least they would not be hungry, for the rich men of the ghetto

of Prague had given Matzos and fruit and fowl and sweet wine to every man of family that he might keep the Passover and sit at the head of his own table on Seder night like a prince in Israel. And those who were alone in the world, orphans, or young scholars, or the very old who had lost all their kin, these were made welcome in the homes of their more fortunate brethren. Treated as honored guests, they sat in their places before the fair white cloths spread with the symbols of the feast, and repeated in their turn the joyful words with which the Jew greets the holiday of freedom for his ancestors. So in the homes of all the Jews of the ghetto of Prague, even the very poorest, the weary ones of Israel found peace and plenty for a single night and sang with joyful voices of the return to Zion.

But in the house of Menachem, the rich money-lender, there was no guest. Perhaps if the hard laws of his day had allowed Menachem to follow some other calling, his heart would not have grown as hard and cold as the yellow pieces of metal which he wrung from the hands of his debtors. Gold had grown to be his God, and he loved it better than even his wife and his children, his son whom they called "the little scholar" from one end of the ghetto to the other, his three fair daughters, the eldest a girl almost ready to stand beneath the Chuppah, so lovely a maiden that it was more than her father's dowry which brought many suitors for her hand to the house of Reuben, the marriage broker.

Tonight they sat around the Seder table, Menachem and his family, and the festal tapers shone

upon rare linen and almost priceless silverware and the high golden cup filled with wine and set apart for Elijah the prophet. Legend has it that on Seder night the prophet wanders from house to house, pausing a moment beside every table where Jews gather to keep the Passover. So a goblet of wine is set aside for him and an empty chair placed beside the chair of the master of the house that the prophet may find a welcome whenever he may come. And not only little children, who with shining eyes hear the tale of the deliverance of Egypt, hope to see the good prophet enter the door kept open for his coming. Often their elders wait also, their tired eyes alight with hope, trusting to see his face, for have they not long believed that after Elijah comes the Messiah himself, he who will surely redeem Israel for all time to come?

So the house of Menachem, money-lender of Prague, was duly cleansed and garnished for the festival; the table was set for the feast, and around it sat his wife and children decked in rich garments, for he was a man of great wealth. But no guest sat at his table, for Menachem thought that he had done more than his duty. Had he not given a handful of his cherished gold to make cheer for the Passover for those who could not buy Matzos and wine for themselves?

Menachem sat upon the heaped cushions of his great carved chair and opened his Haggadah, beautiful with many scenes of the Passover story, that he might begin the service. And the youngest child, a girl of four with her mother's tender eyes and gentle

voice, asked him: "Father, why does the empty chair stand at your side?"

"We always place a chair at the Passover board for the Prophet Elijah," answered Menachem.

"And the needy and the homeless that they may also come in and eat and be satisfied," murmured his wife.

But Menachem did not hear her. He was already reciting the portion that ushers in the service for Seder night.

The evening passed. Outside, the wind—there was never such a wind before in April—blew great whorls of snow against the panes. But within the house of Menachem the fire burned brightly and the candles shone upon the table piled high with rich food and rare wines. Then came the moment for the youngest child, now grown drowsy, but still eager to do her part, to open the door. She flung it wide, rubbing her eyes sleepily; then turned to her father, her voice ringing with joy.

"Father—Elijah has come!" she trebled.

But Menachem frowned in his beard; he shook his head almost angrily. At the door stood a man white-haired and bent and broken, leaning on a traveler's staff. Snow glistened on his moldy fur turban and on his ragged cloak. A beggar, whining and importunate, come to disturb them at their feast! Menachem spoke harshly.

"Who are you and why do you come?" he asked, bidding his wife who had already risen to keep her place.

The unwelcome guest did not answer. He only

shook his head sadly and pointed one trembling, gnarled hand toward the empty chair.

"He wants to sit in Elijah's chair," cried the youngest child.

Her father laughed shortly. "We have no room for beggars," he said. "Go to the rabbi's house. I have given my share that no Jew need go hungry to-night nor want for shelter."

The stranger stood silent, his back bent beneath a heavy burden he carried, which seemed like a peddler's pack.

Menachem's wife pulled the sleeve of his white robe. "Tonight we dare not turn a stranger away," she whispered. "Bid him welcome that he may sit beside us and share our Passover."

"Be off!" and Menachem turned angrily upon the visitor. "Now, children, let us go on with the service," he told his daughters and his son, striving to speak calmly. But he was much troubled in his heart, for the look the stranger had given him had shaken his very soul. Then the old wanderer had turned away, plodding from the room weary and bent low, as though bowed beneath the woes of homeless Israel.

"Menachem," cried his wife, rising pale and frightened, "I cannot let you turn this stranger from our hearth. It is Passover and we must open our doors to the poor and the homeless."

Menachem did not answer. The stranger had closed the door softly behind him, yet an icy blast seemed to flood the room. The candles upon the festal cloth wavered and flickered; the fire blazing

upon the hearth sank to hissing little flames. It was as though Winter or Death had come uninvited to the feast.

Menachem turned as white as the shroud-like garment he wore. In the ghetto it was whispered that he was something of a skeptic; but even his bold heart quailed as he turned his eyes from the frightened faces of his wife and children toward the frost-whitened windowpane which the stranger had passed but a moment before. And though he tried to laugh, he trembled as the youngest child wailed accusingly: "Father, father, it was Elijah you sent out into the storm!"

"Nay, nay, little one," comforted the mother. "Not Elijah, but some poor homeless wanderer we must succor for his sake. Make haste, my husband, and overtake him and bring him in out of the storm, lest this Passover bring us evil instead of good, and misfortune will enter the door we have closed upon a needy brother."

Without a word Menachem went to the door, opened it and looked out into the night. The wind scourged his face with an icy blast, but he did not hesitate. Without a word he plunged into the snow that he might overtake the wayfarer and bid him welcome to his warm fireside.

Those who remained about the table dared not speak. Was this not the night of miracles for Israel; had not father told son for countless generations that some day the wandering prophet of the homeless people would indeed pause beside a Passover table and drink the wine and leave his blessing

ere he departed? So they waited in awe and dread for Menachem to return with the guest he had sought to turn out into the night.

He came back at last, his hair and beard white with snow, his eyes terrible with fear. He said not a word and they dared not question him. With lips that trembled he sought to read the rest of the service; but his shaking hands dropped the richly decorated Haggadah and the words seemed to strangle him. But his youngest little daughter had the courage to climb upon his knee and seek to learn what troubled him.

"Father, father," she begged, "tell us what you saw out in the darkness?"

And Menachem answered her in a voice ragged with fear: "I saw nothing—nothing! The snow is deep and my footprints are plain from our door and back again. But I saw no footprints where he walked away from our door."

Then they all fell silent with a great fear, for they felt certain that it was no mortal wanderer they had turned away from their Seder table. But at last Menachem's wife broke into wailing.

"Alas!" she cried. "Your hardness of heart has at last brought black misfortune upon the heads of our innocent children. For you have turned Elijah the prophet away and he will surely curse us instead of bless."

But no misfortune came upon the house of Menachem. His son fulfilled the promise of his youth and became a scholar famous even in Prague; his daughters married worthy husbands and Mena-

chem and his wife lived to bless their children and to rejoice in their beauty and piety. Yet Menachem never lost the look of a man who fears to look behind as he wanders down a lonely road after sunset. Although his wealth increased year after year, he was more miserable than the poorest beggar in all the ghetto of Prague. And now the poor knew him for a friend and never feared to knock upon his great, bolted door, knowing that it would be opened to them, for Menachem never again turned the needy from his doorstep. Nor did he cease to hope that the beggar with the pack upon his shoulders would come again that he might ask his forgiveness and gladden him with his bounty. Especially on Pass-over, when Menachem's haunted eyes turned ever to the open door as though he still hoped to see the stranger enter and beg for a seat at his table. . . . But although he lived to be a very old man, Menachem never saw the wanderer again.

THE SEPHIRA DAYS OF REMEMBRANCE

The Sefhira days extend from the second day of Passover to the first day of Shabuoth, a period of seven weeks, and Shabuoth the seventh week is named from the Hebrew word for seven and is called the Feast of Weeks; while its Greek title, Pentecost, means fifty, since Shabuoth falls upon the fiftieth day of the counting of the Omer.

These fifty days were set aside in ancient Palestine for the counting of the Omer, a measure of about seven pints of barley, this being the season for reaping the barley in the land of Israel. On Shabuoth an offering of barley was carried to the Temple as well as the first fruits.

But like so many other Jewish holidays the Sefhira days are more than the landmark of a pastoral people. Just as the Christian church has set aside the beautiful festival of All Saints in memory of their dead, the Jew has consecrated his Sefhira days to the thought of the many martyrs who through the persecutions of the crusades gave up their lives for Israel. Each century has added new names to the scroll, for in every land throughout the ages the Jew has paid for his birthright in blood and tears. Now that the Long Night for Judea seems to be breaking at last, his rejoicing at the dawn is mingled with sorrow for those who, dying for Israel, could themselves never die.



A CITY GATE IN PALESTINE

*I love to dream with eyes half-closed,
Of cities far away,
Of home-returning caravans,
Which, at the dusk of day,
Move slowly down the dusty road,
As keen-eyed merchants wait,
While sunset blossoms like a rose,
Behind the city's gate.*

*The city's gate! it really seems
That I went there one day,
Perhaps to purchase and to sell,
Or watch the children play;
Or listen to the ancient tales,
The elders loved to tell;
Or fill the pitchers for the maids,
Who gossiped at the well.*

*O wretched ones in alien lands,
To dream is to be strong:
Though weak, we'll find in dreams
the path*

*Our hearts have known so long;
The Land of Hope is still our own,
Where, safe from foeman's hate,
We'll meet the sons of long ago,
Within the city's gate.*

THE LONG NIGHT*

A Story of the Sephira Days in Bohemia

It was in the days of the Second Crusade, when those who journeyed to the Holy Land to fight for the Sepulcher traveled along a crimson road and every hand seemed to be raised against the Jew. Princes who wore the crusader's cross upon their velvet mantles, peasants who lay aside their ploughshares for consecrated swords, barefoot monks and beggars, even little children trudged the long way to Palestine and as they went they slew. For many believed in their hearts that if they left all they held dear to save the Sepulcher of him they worshipped from the hands of unbelievers, they should show but little mercy to the hated Jews who had brought him to his death.

But in that long night of hatred and persecution, good men arose who not only preached the words of the Nazarene, but carried his love for all men in their hearts. And one was a priest, fearless and eager to save the harried ones of Israel. We do not know even his name—only that he loved our brethren and sought to save them in their need.

* This story is based on an actual incident during the Second Crusade.

In the golden days of Bohemia, the Jews and their Christian neighbors had lived at peace with one another. There had been friendship and trust between them until the Crusaders' pilgrimage of love had brought hatred into the pleasant land, and Christian learned to despise Jew and Jew knew what it was to fear Christian. And no men grieved more at this division than Rabbi Abram, a gentle old man who looked upon all as his brethren, and the keen-eyed young priest who often visited him to listen to his words of learning, and even ate at his table.

In the house of Rabbi Abram dwelt his grandchild, a girl of seventeen, Miriam, whose laughter made silvery music in the dim room where the old rabbi and the young priest often sat together over their books. And very often the priest's eyes followed the gleam of her golden hair as she passed lightly to and fro on some household task. But they seldom spoke, for he seemed to be absorbed in the learning of the Hebrews which the rabbi expounded to him, and she was a Jewish daughter unaccustomed to much speech with men. Yet on the days when she was absent, the dim room seemed darker to the young priest and he was less likely to linger after his lesson was over.

"Is it true," Rabbi Abram asked his friend one day, "is it true that we Jews must again suffer as in the days of our fathers?" He shuddered as he spoke for he remembered only too well the horrors of the First Crusade. "Will the Church do nothing to save us, for we are clean of all wrongdoing in the sight of God and men?"

And the priest could only shake his head for his heart was heavy with foreboding.

Nearer and nearer came the red wave of persecution which threatened to engulf all the helpless ones of Israel. The Crusaders swept on, frenzied with their lust to torture, to pillage, to slay. Here and there a noble of high estate or a powerful churchman sought to stay the tide, but they were as helpless as a little child who would drive back the ocean with its hand. In every corner of Europe the Jews waited shudderingly for death.

In the house of Rabbi Abram gathered the elders of the Jewish community. They had no plan of escape, no suggestions for safety. They sat grief-stricken and silent, save when this one or that would burst out into wailing, whereupon the others would sway back and forth in their grief like mourners over a grave. Two candles burned upon the table where in brighter days Rabbi Abram had studied with his friend, the young priest. Now they seemed like two ghostly memorial tapers for the dead.

There was a knock at the door and Miriam, her fair face white and grief-stricken, stole softly from her corner and moved to open it. A man entered, dressed in a dark cloak which completely muffled his face. But when he lowered it those who sat about the table knew him for the young priest.

"Sholom Aleichem," he murmured, even as one of them might have done. He came quickly to Rabbi Abram's side and took his hand. "My teacher," he said, "I have dreadful news for you. I have learned—no matter how—that when the

Crusaders enter our gates tomorrow they will batter down your houses until not a stone remains upon stone. The bishop would grant you your lives but what is his word against the frenzy of these madmen?"

He would have said more, but his voice was drowned in the low, dreary wailing of those who knew themselves marked for death.

Miriam was the first to speak. She came to the young priest, her eyes flashing in her pale face, so distraught that for once she forgot her maiden modesty and caught his hand. "My grandfather!" she pleaded, "Will you not save him at least from what lies before us? He is an old man and very weak. And he has been your teacher and your friend."

Very gently he took her hand from the sleeve of his dark robe. There was a strange glow in his cheeks as he answered her; then the flush died away leaving him paler than before. He turned to the others and his voice, though low and restrained, seemed to ring out like a trumpet in that quiet place.

"Those who seek to serve the Cross have stained their hands with blood," he said, "and now they would again shed blood in this peaceful town where Jew and Christian have long dwelt together in unity and love. Should I not seek to save you, then would my hands be stained with blood like theirs, and I, like Judas, would betray my master by giving over his brethren to death. For his sake, then, will I seek to save your lives, even at the risk of my own. Go

now to your homes and say no word to your neighbors who are not of Israel. Gather enough food for a long journey and bring with you your wives and your little ones when you return to this place an hour hence. Under the cover of darkness we will seek to steal to safety."

An old man, bent and withered, broke in almost petulantly: "There is no safety for Israel. Let us die in the place of our birth and find rest at last beside the graves of our fathers."

"Only in the House of Life is there safety for Israel," sobbed another patriarch.

"Nay," cried the young priest, and there was that in his voice which inspired even the most helpless. "I have the promise of the bishop that you will be allowed to leave the city unmolested. We will journey to that corner of France where the Crusaders have already passed. There I have a brother, a nobleman, powerful enough to grant you protection until it is safe for you to return to Bohemia. But hasten—we must start out before dawn if you would escape the swords of these butchers who journey to the Holy Land."

In an hour there huddled together in the house of Rabbi Abram every Jewish soul, from old men, weeping and lamenting that they would surely die upon the roadside, to little children who slept peacefully in their mothers' arms, dreaming neither of exile nor death. And the young priest passed among them, comforting, exhorting, his white face stern and sharp as a sword, save when he glanced at Miriam, who never left her grandfather's side.

Then a strange light gleamed in his somber eyes, even as when Miriam's trembling hand had rested upon his arm. . . . The dim rays of the lantern he carried fell upon the golden ringlets that had escaped from the dark scarf wound about her head. Her beauty hurt him and a look of pain swept across his face.

The days and nights that followed were like one long night of agony and fear. For the way was bleak and hard and many aged and weak perished and were laid to rest by the roadside, far from the House of Life, where they had left their own fathers, exiles in a strange land. Yet the living envied them their deaths, for neither the hatred of man nor the cruel weariness of the road could torment them any more. And those who lived were spent and sick and faint for food. More than one lost hope in that long, dark night and begged to be allowed to drop by the wayside to wait for death that seemed to promise far more than life for the hunted ones of Israel. But the young priest comforted them with strong words and filled even the weariest with hope until they rose again to follow him along the dusty road which led to France and safety.

Of their stay in that sheltered corner, far from the fury of the crusaders, no records tell; but the old chronicles relate that when peace seemed certain for the Jews of Bohemia, they returned in safety to their native land and spent there the remainder of their days.

Nor do the records which tell the story of the

return of the Jews to Bohemia bear mention of the parting between the young priest and Miriam when he left her at the door of her grandfather's house. . . .

"You saved us all from death—or worse," she told him, and her sweet eyes shone with tears. "May the God who watches over Christian and Jew reward you and show you mercy in your need even as you have shown mercy to my helpless people."

"May He indeed show me mercy, for I am sorely tried and afflicted," answered the young priest, and the words seemed forced from his twitching lips.

"You do not mean that you will suffer for your kindness to us—that the bishop——"

"Nay, for he is your people's friend. But my trouble——" He could say no more and turned to leave, but she stayed him.

"Will you not tell my grandfather of your trouble? He is a wise man and pious and he will give you good counsel." She turned to lead him into the dim little room where he had often sat with her grandfather, but the priest shook his head.

"I cannot speak of my grief—even to him. He is an old man and wise and pious as you say—but is it not written that sometimes the young shall be our teachers? Miriam—you are but a child—yet, perchance, your counsel may come more directly from God."

She blushed crimson. "Nay—I am but a woman—and unlearned," she stammered.

"It is because you are a woman that your heart

will speak the very truth of God," he insisted. "My heart is heavy because of the grief of a dear friend of mine—a grief known but to him and to me alone. He is a priest like myself, loved and respected. Until now he has served his God in singleness of heart. Now he loves a woman."

Miriam's innocent eyes grew larger with wonder. "A priest?" she questioned. "I thought the priests of your church were forbidden to wed."

"Ay, but for her sake he would forsake his vow and live an outcast from his kind. For her dear sake he would live the rest of his days among infidels, willing to face the punishments of the hereafter for the joy her love would bring him in his life. This has my friend decided, but he dare not tell the maiden of his love."

"Why?" her voice was very low.

He leaned toward her, his eyes devouring her face. "Because, Miriam, she is a Jewess. I need not tell you that the laws of her people and mine would forbid such a marriage even if I—even if my friend were not a priest. He loves her with a love that is stronger than death, but he does not know whether she loves him enough to risk exile and shame and even death for his sake. If you were that woman——" He said no more, but stood silent before her.

Miriam's face was as cold and passionless as snow as she answered him. "If I were that woman," she answered calmly, "I would tell your friend: 'Do not stain the beautiful deed you have done for my

people by bringing shame upon one of their honored teachers, like—like my grandfather. Let them think of you as a Christian who is merciful to Israel for love of the master he serves—not for love of a woman. Help a Jewish woman to treasure in her heart the thought of a noble man who did nobly with no thought of reward.’” She smiled into his somber eyes a little wanly. “This is my message to your ‘friend,’” she told him.

He drew his robes closer about him, his face cold and sharp like a sword. “Bid your grandfather farewell for me,” he said quietly. “Tomorrow I set out for the Holy Land on a pilgrimage which will be as a penance for my sin.”

He turned from her so abruptly that he was mercifully unaware of the white agony of her face. Nor did he turn as he passed down the twisted, narrow street, so he was spared the sight of her swaying upon the threshold of her grandfather’s house, her hands extended to him as he went out of her life forever.

“God forgive me for loving you,” sobbed Miriam. . . .

She lived to be a very old woman and often told the grandchildren who clustered about her knee of the terrible flight into France when the crusaders left a crimson stain across the land. But she told them little of the young priest who had guided her people into life and liberty. Still she had not forgotten him, for in the Sephira days, when all Israel mourns the martyrs who have fallen for the glory

of God, she prayed also for the young priest who had died so many years ago in the Holy Land. She was a pious mother in Israel and often feared she sinned for cherishing such memories—yet she never once forgot the prayers for the lover of her youth.

LAG BAOMER

THE SCHOLARS' HOLIDAY

Lag Baomer is the thirty-third day in the counting of the Omer. It is a welcome break in the period of the sad Sephira days, and marriages, prohibited during the rest of the seven weeks, are permitted, while children in Cheder often found in the minor holiday one of the happiest days in the entire school year.

For the day became a special holiday for school children, since according to one account a dreadful plague that raged during the Sephira days suddenly ceased on Lag Baomer because of the prayers of the pupils of Rabbi Akiba. For this reason the Cheder pupils were allowed a special indulgence, respite from their long lessons and an entire day's excursion in the fields. It was hoped that the day of freedom might remind the children that once the Jew had owned broad and fertile fields of his own, while the bows that the boys carried were said to signify the rainbow, the symbol of hope that some day the Jew would no longer be an exile upon the face of the earth, but would hold his own land in peace and prosperity.

According to other stories, the bows were to remind the children of the miracle of Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai, the great Jewish mystic, who is said to have written the mysterious volume of the Zohar. During the days when the Romans held sway over Palestine the rabbis were

forbidden to teach the Law to their pupils on pain of death. Simeon ben Yohai would have suffered death for defying his Roman masters had he not taken refuge in a cave, where he remained hidden for fourteen years. When he died the rainbow, which had not been seen during his lifetime, again appeared in the sky, recalling his prophecy that before the Messiah came to free the Jewish people a bow of many colors would appear in the heavens. And so the old symbol of hope became a promise of the hoped-for redeemer of Israel.

Many hoped it would be Bar Kochba, the dashing Jewish general who for a while defied even the armies of Rome. Among his staunchest supporters was Rabbi Akiba, who did all he could to rally followers for Bar Kochba, and after his death continued to teach the Jewish Law until he was thrown into prison. Dying of the most agonizing tortures, his courage astonished even his executioners, who thought that only by some sorcery could he be able to endure his agony with a smile.

"No," answered Rabbi Akiba from the midst of the flames, "I am no sorcerer. Every day of my life I have repeated the Shema, but today for the first time I really know what it means to love the Lord my God with all my heart and all my soul and all my strength."

Around his body the Romans had wound the scroll of the Torah and they laughed to see the two consumed to ashes together. But the spirit of Rabbi Akiba lived on in his descendants, who continued to study the Law long after their tormentors had gone their way along with the other vanquished nations of the earth. Again the Dove had triumphed over the Eagle; again had conquered Israel outlived his conqueror.



THE PROMISE OF SPRING

*Hanging on the apple spray,
Sings a robin all the day:
(How the song o'erflows his throat!)*
Praise to God Who gives us May.

*Shy the violet and afraid,
Yet she murmurs in her glade:
(All her soul in perfume shed)*
Thanks to Him for sun and shade!

*If the Father loves them well,
Bird and Flower of the dell,
His great heart will keep us warm,
Israel's children, safe from harm;
He who gives the violet dew,
He will nourish Israel, too!*



THE DOVE AND THE EAGLE

A Story of Lag Baomer in Palestine

The rain-drenched trees were vocal with spring, for the little birds knew nothing of the sorrows of Israel, and sang from happy hearts. But the Jewish students, who gathered together in Meron during the dark days of Hadrian's persecution of the faithful, grieved together, and doubted whether the clouds would ever disappear from their sky.

"Even our master, Rabbi ben Yochai, has been taken from us," lamented Judah ben Simon. He was a stern-faced man, a little older than the rest, who loved naught but the Torah, unless it was his motherless son Abraham, a slight, pale lad who sat near him in respectful silence. "It is said he dwells in a cave deep in the forest, but how do we know whether he lives or whether he be taken to his fathers."

"If we could but visit him," murmured several of the rabbi's disciples.

"Nay," declared Benjamin ben Aaron, another of the older men, "that would be impossible. The cursed Romans have, as you know, placed a price upon his head for teaching our Torah to us, and if he be found his life will be forfeit. Their soldiers

are scattered even through the forest, and if they saw us approach where the master is hidden they would suspect his hiding place and drag him forth to his death."

"But if we might go unobserved," insisted Judah. "For surely it would cheer his heart to know that we, his disciples, still study our Torah in secret, and though threatened by death, are still faithful to the law he taught us."

"Father," little Abraham cried out suddenly, "may I speak?"

His father frowned upon him, for it was not seemly for a ten-year-old lad to speak before a gathering of his elders; but the boy was too excited to wait for permission, and swept on eagerly.

"Father, I know a way in which we may visit Rabbi ben Yochai without bringing evil upon his head or our own."

"Then speak," commanded his father, half smiling at the boy's eagerness.

"A few days ago, when I was playing in the forest," began Abraham, blushing a little to be the center of so many eyes, "I saw a number of the Romans hunting game with bows and arrows. They would question us if we wandered through the woods without being able to explain our errand; but if we carried bows and arrows and game bags they would think we were out hunting and would let us pass in peace."

"Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings!" exclaimed Manasseh ben Sadi. "The child's words are a path of safety to our feet."

"We will go tomorrow; we will seek our master," the others chorused happily.

"Father, let me go," pleaded little Abraham when they were alone in their house that evening. "I will be very good; I will not speak a word. But I do want to look upon the face of Rabbi ben Yochai again."

His father considered. "Yes, you may go," he said at last. "It will be a thing to tell your sons' sons in years to come how you were one of a band of faithful sons of Israel who sought their rabbi and cheered him in his exile."

"But can the child be trusted?" objected Benjamin the next day, when, equipped with bows and arrows and game bags, the group of students met together and prepared to set out for the forest. "If we were to come upon the Roman guards suddenly——"

"Then he would conduct himself as my son," answered the boy's father. "Besides, it might do much to disarm their suspicions if they saw that one of us had taken a child with us, as though we had nothing to fear."

"What do you carry in your breast, my boy?" asked Manasseh, as they set out for the forest.

"My pet dove," answered the lad, showing it to him, resting contentedly in the breast of his loose robe.

"I never saw it before, although I have often visited your father."

"I have not had it long," explained Abraham, delighted to be allowed to talk about his pet. "A few weeks ago I was playing in the woods and I

found the poor creature caught in a trap, starving, and its leg hurt and bleeding.”

“So you rescued it,” smiled Manasseh, amused at the boy’s earnestness, for like most Jews of his generation he could not understand feeling affection for a household pet. “But why did you not leave it at home today?”

The boy shook his head gravely. “I was afraid. Suppose the Romans had taken the whim to destroy Meron and had fired our houses; the poor thing could not have escaped from his cage and would have perished. And if I had found it dead——” He held the little bundle of feathers closer to his heart, and even Manasseh understood, as he remembered how the little fellow had no brothers and sisters and sorely missed his mother, dead these many months.

But he said nothing, only laid a kindly hand upon the boy’s shoulder, and together they walked in silence beneath the trees still sparkling from the warm spring shower. It was a world of peace they had entered, and for a moment he ceased to think of Rome and the persecutions of Hadrian.

Then suddenly he caught the boy’s arm and spoke to him with a low note of warning. No more was needed. In those days a Jewish boy was taught to be wary and to look for danger even when he seemed to walk in paths of peace. “What is it?” he half whispered.

His heart leaped to his throat, for he saw approaching the little party of Jews a dozen or more Roman soldiers, glittering in all their bravery of

crimson and gold. They stopped a few yards from the trembling scholars and he who seemed to be their leader asked sharply:

“Judæans, where are you going?”

“Do men seek for the fish in the rivers when they carry bows and arrows?” answered Benjamin, striving to speak lightly. “How have you fared with your hunting, O Centurion?”

The Centurion eyed him suspiciously. “It is strange to see Jewish scholars follow the chase,” he commented. “What have your arrows brought to earth?”

Child though he was, little Abraham realized their deadly danger, and his quick mind grasped at a straw by which they might escape. A sudden diversion might allay the Roman’s suspicions, but should he continue to doubt, death might be the end of this day’s hunting. Not their blood alone, but, if his hiding place were discovered, the blood of the revered rabbi would flow as well. Although his heart almost broke within him at the thought of the thing he planned to do, his lips did not tremble as he whispered to his companion:

“They have not noticed us yet. Fit your arrow to your bow quickly and shoot when I let my dove fly, that they may think we have indeed come into the forest for our hunting.” He pressed his lips to the little creature’s head, whispering the words he had always used when he wished it to fly to its cote at night, and with a slow lifting of wings the white bird left his breast and soared up into the sunshine.

“Look—a bird!” cried Manasseh in pretended

joy, although his soul grieved for the grief of the child beside him. He had been a soldier in his youth and his arrow was well aimed. A moment later the dove, pierced and bleeding, lay at his feet. He lifted the fluttering bird high before the Romans.

"At last we have found game," he said, speaking lightly. "Will you not join us in our hunt?"

Long after the Romans had passed on, the little band of faithful scholars greeted their rabbi in the cave in which he had sought refuge. And there Manasseh told the story of the dove sacrificed for their sakes, and there did Abraham's father bid the boy cease his weeping.

"For you are almost a man," he said sternly, "and must put away childish things."

"But I loved my dove," sobbed Abraham.

"Grieve not, my son," Rabbi ben Yochai was speaking now, "for through the death of your treasure these men of Israel live. Even so has our Israel ever been the dove pursued by the eagle, yet lovely in the eyes of Him who made it. You have done a mighty thing today, my son, for you have saved these men in whom the Torah lives."

"But I want my dove," sobbed Abraham, and he would not be comforted.

SHABUOTH

THE FESTIVAL OF THE FIRST FRUITS

Shabuoth, coming the seventh week after Passover, is the second pilgrim feast of the Jew. On that day it was obligatory for the head of every household to journey to Jerusalem to lay upon the altar the first fruits of his trees and his offering of wheat. For in Palestine the harvest comes very early, the barley harvest at Passover, the wheat at Shabuoth and the harvest of fruits in the autumn at Succoth. So on Shabuoth the offering was not only a basket of first fruits arranged according to a fanciful pattern and a dove, but also two loaves of bread baked from the first grain of the year's harvest.

In Palestine at Shabuoth the meadows are covered with flowers. The festival may be said to be the Flower Day of the Jewish people; even in the Middle Ages, when the stony pavements of the ghetto gave no promise of blooming for the landless people, the Jew, who could never forget the pastoral pilgrimages of his nation, still decked his synagogue with flowery garlands and scattered grass upon the floors.

Today the custom of the offering of "first fruits" is observed by many Jews, who have set aside the day for Confirmation. On Shabuoth boys and girls who have been instructed in their religion pledge their allegiance to Judaism, and, like the children who listened to the thunders at Sinai, repeat the solemn promise, "All that the Lord has laid upon us will we do."

For on Shabuoth occurred an event perhaps more momentous to the Jew than the delivery from Egypt; on Passover he became a free man, on Shabuoth the God Who delivered him from bondage gave him a moral code by which to live. According to one legend, the Ten Commandments were offered in turn to the heathen neighbors of the Jewish people; each rejected the Torah, refusing to obey its precepts. But the Jews not only promised to obey the Voice from Sinai, but offered their children as pledges that the Torah would always be treasured by Israel.

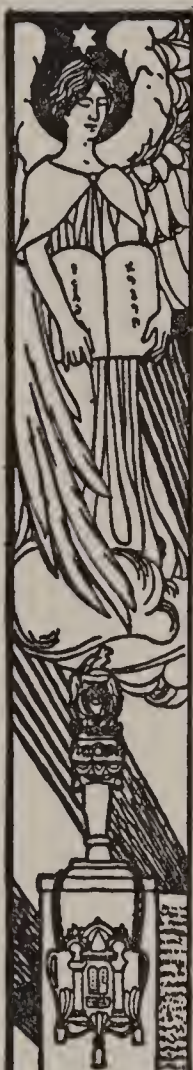
On Shabuoth the Book of Ruth is read in the synagogue since Ruth of Moab, although the daughter of an alien people, accepted the Law of Israel and vowed to remain true to its teachings. The story is most appropriate for the Shabuoth season since it is a lovely idyl laid in the fields of Judea, a story of the barley harvest and how Ruth, a stranger, came to find shelter in the land of Israel.

Today as we gather in our synagogues to listen to the old story our minds wander back along the twisted paths our people have trod since that first Shabuoth at Sinai; we see the rugged mountain, crowned with flames, the Jews prostrate at its foot as they waited for the sound of the Divine Voice; we catch glimpses of the simple pastoral life of Israel in the days when Ruth, footsore and weary, entered Bethlehem to find there a husband and home; we watch the happy pilgrims journeying toward Jerusalem, their offerings in their hands, a picture that dissolves and gives place to a scene in a medieval synagogue, cramped and dark and unlovely, but beautiful on a springtime day when an exiled people decked it with garlands, rejoicing in their Law that like a rose shed its perfume in an alien land far from Jerusalem.

THE NEW HARVEST

*No more doth Ruth among the sheaves
Her hard-won treasures heap;
No more beneath the laughing leaves
Young David tends his sheep:
Our kingly Saul who drove the plough
Hath fallen by the sword;
Shabuoath brings no pilgrim now
With songs to praise the Lord.*

*But we who on our shoulders bore
The Ghetto's heavy pack,
Land-hungry as our sires of yore,
Have slowly wandered back;
We prune the trees, we till the soil
Our kings and prophets trod;
Their land grows holier through the toil
We dedicate to God.*



A ROSE FOR BEAUTY

A Story of Shabuoth in France

In the days when the name of Rashi filled the heart of every pious Jew in France with pride, the ghetto folk, although they walked in the narrow ways of the towns, still found it possible to welcome the Festival of Shabuoth as joyfully as a bridegroom greets his bride. They had forgotten the fragrance of the open fields, but when the days of the Omer were over and Shabuoth brought springtime and hope, the exiled Jews greeted the holy day with rejoicing and flowers and song. True, they no longer journeyed along the paths of Palestine, singing as they went, their arms filled with offerings from their own fields, brought to lay upon the altar at Jerusalem; but now after centuries of exile, the children of Israel spread sweet-smelling grass upon the floors of their synagogues and turned their bare houses of prayer into bowers of fresh spring blossoms.

In Le Mans—where even today the traveler sees the remains of the old Street of the Jews, which still bears its ancient name, although for many years no Jew has dwelt within its boundaries—in the little city of Le Mans dwelt Reuben the merchant and his only child Rachel. Rachel, being motherless, had

long since become the mistress of her father's home and was wise beyond her years in all the matters of the house; her father's wealth was the envy of even Christian hearts in Le Mans; yet had she been heavy of hand and slothful and without a dowry, still Rachel would never have waited long for a suitor. Her face was like a rose in its fresh beauty and more than one maiden in the Street of the Jews had to confess that if the Jews ever descended to the follies of their Gentile neighbors and crowned one of their number Queen of Beauty, the daughter of Reuben would have surely worn that diadem.

So it was little wonder that Zebulun, the marriage broker, came often to the house of Rachel's father, there to sit and chat with Reuben over the red wine and present the name of first this suitor and then that for the rich man's approval. And he named, one after another, the most worthy young men in the whole city, youths of proud names and wealth, or scholars of promise, lads any man might have been proud to choose for a son-in-law. But at every visit Reuben the merchant did a thing so shocking that few Jews believed Zebulun at first when he sought to spread the scandal through Le Mans: instead of deciding upon a husband for his daughter, he would actually call her into the room and discuss the matter with her. No wonder Zebulun was heard to declare that Reuben must either be in his dotage or else he was bewitched by his own daughter's beauty!

"Nay, my father," Rachel would declare at every interview, "nay, the young man may be worthy of a

queen, but I do not care to marry him." And then she would run laughingly from the room, leaving Reuben to chuckle over his glass and Zebulun to declare that the end of the world was surely coming when Jewish maidens were allowed to pick and choose among their suitors like the heathen ladies who actually gave their lovers favors to wear before the eyes of all men even before their betrothals.

"True, true," Reuben would nod, smiling in his beard. "And it is right for other fathers to choose husbands for their daughters, and it is fitting that other Jewish maidens obey. But my Beauty is not like other women; she laughs and sings and plays from morning until night, but her dark eyes are like her mother's and I can trust them to see clearly. And why should I be in haste to have her wed when she is not yet seventeen and a child in so many ways?"

"A child!" Zebulun was now really horror-stricken. "Do we not pity even a dowerless maiden who has not come beneath the marriage canopy before her seventeenth year? Do not yield to her whims, I beg you, else neither your gold nor her beauty will bring her a husband in the end."

But Reuben only laughed, declaring it would make him happy if Beauty never thought of taking a husband until he himself no longer needed her and lay at peace in the House of Life beside Rachel's fair mother. Which was such a shocking wish for a Jewish father in those days, when to remain unwed was considered little less than a sin, that Zebulun

had no answer at all and left him speechless with horror.

Now it was Shabuoth again, which meant that springtime had come to Le Mans, not only to the estates of the nobles and the princes, where the trees leaved and budded in the golden sunshine, but to the Street of the Jews also, where the children of Israel returned in spirit to the homeland and dreamed of long-ago pilgrimages along the sun-warmed roads of Palestine. And Rachel, opening the latticed window of her chamber, sang for sheer joy as she looked out into the street below and listened to the twitter of the little birds, a-building in the eaves.

Her merry eyes grew suddenly grave. "Spring!" murmured Rachel, "and the birds are building their nests and preparing to care for their little ones. But I have no home of my own, although my father is very good to me. All my girl friends have wedded and are happy in building their homes, while I am still like a wild bird who fears the cage." And now her eyes brightened as they fell upon a youth passing slowly down the street on his way to the synagogue. For she recognized him as Nathaniel, an orphan youth of whom even the oldest men along the Jews' Street spoke with great respect. Nathaniel was poor and alone in the world; he had neither the gold of the money-lender and merchant nor the greater gold of eloquent speech. But the men who remained in the House of Study from early morning until far in the night, loath to rest even for a moment from their reading of the Torah, these scholars declared that Nathaniel was a lad of great promise, a shining

light of learning, even in that day when to be a student was greater than to be a king.

Nathaniel had never raised his eyes to Rachel, nor, in fact, to any other maiden. When he stepped from the dim day of the synagogue into the bright sunshine of the Jews' Street, his eyes ever sought the ground and he walked like a man in a dream, his lips moving noiselessly as though he still murmured passages from his beloved Torah. No recluse shut in a monastery cell, no holy hermit, revered by the Christians, ever lived more remote from his fellow-men than did Nathaniel, the youth upon whom Rachel, the Beauty of the Jews' Street, now gazed with shining eyes.

An hour later when Nathaniel sat in his familiar corner, swaying to and fro as he fed upon the honey of the Torah, Rachel, standing before her mirror, decked herself in her fairest garments, even slipping about her neck and arms the golden ornaments her mother had worn upon her wedding day. And in her glossy braids she thrust a red rose before she joined her father.

Reuben looked her over with proud eyes. "Why are you dressed with such splendor, my daughter?" he asked, noting the jewels.

"Is it not fitting to deck myself like a bride, when I go to the synagogue on Shabuoth," answered Rachel demurely, "since this day is the betrothal day for Israel?" From a vessel upon the table she drew forth a huge cluster of crimson roses and lilies. "See, I take these to make the synagogue beautiful for our festival."

They walked to the synagogue together, Rachel chattering all the way as though she wished to make up for the time she must be absent from him, up in the women's gallery, during the services. But the man was silent, thinking how much she looked like her mother on her day of betrothal, before the marriage shears had shorn her of her crown of glossy hair.

So they passed from the bright warmth of the street into the cool dimness of the synagogue. And there, bending over his desk, sat Nathaniel, his lips moving, his eyes aglow with happiness. Rachel was only a simple woman, unlearned in the Law, but she knew that at that moment Nathaniel was not thinking of the spring sunshine outside or roses and lilies or a maiden's face. And she knew at that moment that she wanted Nathaniel to lay aside his dreaming for a little while at least and love her as well as the Torah to which he had given every hour of his young life.

Rachel hesitated as she stood there, her arms filled with lilies and roses she had brought to make the synagogue beautiful for Shabuoth. Then, a look of determination in her bright eyes, she dropped a rose across the page over which Nathaniel leaned. A moment later she was gone, but the rose, breathing of spring and youth and sunshine, lay like a softly flushing ruby upon the holy words.

Rousing himself slowly from his dreaming, Nathaniel picked up the flower. He looked at it curiously, for he had been far too busy studying the word of God to learn to love His handiwork.

Another time and he might have tossed it aside; but he remembered that on Shabuoth flowers and sweet-smelling grass and young trees are brought to the very altar and that a pious Jew may enjoy their beauty. So he murmured the prayer to be recited when a man looks upon a beautiful object; then turned again to his study.

But he did not throw the rose away. It was still in his hand as he went from the House of Study that night and passed below the window where Rachel, a rose still in her hair, looked down upon him. Then, for a second time that day, the daughter of Reuben the merchant did an unseemly and immodest thing. She slipped down the stairs and followed Nathaniel, and when she reached his side called his name. She had not forgotten that such boldness would brand a modest Jewish maiden with everlasting shame; but she was determined to speak with him, and she was too impatient to devise another plan.

Nathaniel stared at her with eyes suddenly awake and almost unconsciously repeated the prayer which the rose had called from his lips. For now that he looked upon a girl's face he found her very fair. She seemed like a rose to him in her fresh, young beauty, and he stared helplessly from the flower he held in his hand to her flushed, shamed face.

Rachel spoke at last. "Give me back my rose," and she held out her hand. "It is mine," she added, as he did not answer. "I dropped it this morning in the synagogue."

Then Nathaniel found his voice and answered, not

like a pious student of the Torah, but like a poet: "That is why I want to keep this rose."

Rachel glanced nervously toward her father's house; she must not be seen standing here in the street talking to a young man; yet she was determined that Nathaniel would know just why she had sought him so boldly.

"You must give me my rose," she repeated firmly. "It was the most beautiful rose I had and it should have been placed in the synagogue with my other flowers."

"But tomorrow it will be withered," urged Nathaniel. "Why do you want it back?"

"I do not want it at all," confessed Rachel. "I only wanted to talk with you. Now I must not see you alone again for—oh, many, many days. But ask Zebulun, the marriage broker, to come to my father's house tomorrow and talk with him. My father will not mind your being poor, because you are already such a great scholar," she ended shamelessly.

For a great scholar Nathaniel showed himself very slow of wit. "You mean that you will marry me?" he stammered.

Rachel nodded. "Now give me back my rose."

"Why? You said you did not care for it."

But her fingers had already closed about the flower. "I will give you this instead," and she drew the sister rose from her hair. "Tell Zebulun to come very soon," she called over her shoulder, for she feared that on the morrow a dreamer like her lover might go back to his studies and forget all about her.

Nathaniel did not forget the night he gave Beauty her rose—at least for several years, for how can one expect a pious Jew and a great scholar always to act like a heathen poet? But Rachel remembered even after the rose leaves had withered into dust and her own daughters, only a little less beautiful than she had been in her youth, passed under the marriage canopy.

TISHA B'AV

THE DAY ON WHICH OUR TEMPLE FELL

Tisha b'Av, the ninth day of the month of Av, usually occurs in August and marks the day on which the Temple at Jerusalem was destroyed, first by the Babylonians, later by the Romans. In 586 (B. C. E.) the Babylonian conqueror, Nebuchadnezzar, sent soldiers who laid waste the city of David and leveled the Temple to the ground. Its golden ornaments and sacred vessels were carried to Babylon, where for fifty years the exiled Jews dreamed of Jerusalem and refused to sing the songs of Zion in a strange land.

Then those who had gone forth from Jerusalem, weeping and lamenting, were permitted to return to the land of their fathers. The Jews returned to Jerusalem and soon another Temple arose and again the songs and chants of priests and Levites were heard within its walls. But as the years passed the land of Judea fell the prey to foreign conquerors. In the year 70 (C. E.) the Romans under the leadership of Titus, afterwards emperor of Rome, attacked the city and after a long and terrible siege made a breach in the walls about Jerusalem. It is said that Titus wished to spare the Temple; but when a Roman soldier was attacked by a few refugees who had sought shelter there, the Romans could not be restrained and burned the entire building except the Western Wall, which remains to this very day.

This wall, runs the legend, was the work of the poorest men of Israel; because they gave of the labor of their hands and praised God while they erected their wall, it has survived the centuries and still stands as a memorial of the ruined Temple. It is at this ruined wall that Jews have prayed year after year for the restoration of Zion; although they seemed to pray in vain they never ceased their vigil and their lamentations until the spot became known as the Wailing Wall and was never without its mourners.

Jews in other lands still mourned less for the loss of the kingdom of Israel than for the destruction of their Temple. In every land Jews still turn toward Jerusalem when they pray; in every land the day on which the Temple fell is set apart as a day of fasting and of mourning as for the dead.

From morning until dark they gather in their synagogues, where they sit upon the floor, mourning in oriental fashion and repeating the Lamentations of Jeremiah the prophet, said to have been an eye-witness of the first destruction. The prophet describes the horrors of the destruction of a great city, the desolation and the silence where once reigned gladness and song, the pitiful helplessness of the young children who have survived the siege. No wonder the worshippers in the synagogue weep when they read the lines on Tisha b'Av, for the words describe the endless martyrdom of Israel and might have been written in our own day.

Yet Lamentations ends in a note of hope, a prayer that God will show mercy unto His people and renew their days as of old. Legend tells us that when Jeremiah wandered through the ruins of his beloved city after it had been made desolate by the Babylonians, he came upon a woman veiled and weeping. She told him that her house had been destroyed, her husband slain and

her sons carried into captivity. When she uncovered her face Jeremiah saw that she was no mortal woman but Mother Zion herself, and although his own heart was desolate he sought to comfort her, saying: "Weep no more, O unhappy mother, for surely your troubles will some day end and your sons will return unto you."

Today when the sons of Zion return to their Mother, singing and strong in hope, it is surely time to hope for a new Temple, not like the old one, beautiful as it was, but a spiritual center for all the nations that shall flow unto it!

O LITTLE LAND

*O little Land of Long Ago,
Across the troubled seas,
I long to tread your pleasant ways
Beneath the olive trees.
I want to wander in the fields
That Ruth and Boaz trod,
And see the place where Jacob slept
And dreamed his dream of God.*

*O little Land of Long Ago,
Across the shining sands,
I want to join the pilgrim folk,
That come from many lands
To gather in the Wailing Place,
As Sabbath shadows fall,
And pray for Zion and her hope
Before the Temple wall.*

*O little Land of Long Ago,
Beneath the smiling skies,
Where old men weep for Judah's woe,
Another shrine will rise.
Their sons will build Jerusalem
With blood and sweat and pain:
Rejoice, rejoice, O little Land,
For we come home again!*



THE VISION THAT PASSED

A Story of Tisha b'Av in Poland

I do not know whether this story be a true tale or only a dream dreamed by an old man grown drowsy from long reading of an ancient book. I know only that it is a tale told me by my grandfather, who had it from his own father in the long ago.

Rabbi Joshua was a very old man who had lived so long that life had grown to be but a sucked fruit, for the pulp was gone and only the tasteless rind remained. Once he had been a young student aglow with the dreams of youth; once he had stood with the elders of his people gathered in the synagogue, swaying, weeping, as they prayed for the redemption of Zion and the scattered folk of Israel. And while the others wept, a strange hope glowed in his heart and he repeated in his own soul: "These eyes will behold the return of my people unto Zion." So, if he wept at all, his tears were tears of joy.

In those days Joshua knew the joys of the student and he was at peace. Later came the joy of love when a maiden slipped her hand into his and listened to his wooing. Joshua wedded her and was happy in her love, and for a little while he forgot to dream of the redemption of his people. For, untroubled by

sorrow, he no longer felt the chains of woe which bound him to his brethren.

Children came to him, a boy for whom he dreamed great dreams, about whose head he already caught the gleam of the scholar's crown which is more precious than gold, and a girl of even rarer beauty than her mother. And in the joy of his fatherhood Joshua found that the altar fires which had blazed in his heart died down to a pleasant flame upon the hearth.

As he grew older, Joshua became a noted man in his community, famed for his piety and his learning, even in Poland, that abiding place of learned and pious men. Honored by old and young, happy in the love of his wife and children, what wonder that for a little while he ceased to dream of the redeemer who was to lead Israel from weeping unto singing, from darkness unto light? What wonder that after a day of happy calm he slept contented through the dreamless night, nor waked to weep for the many woes of Israel?

It is said that the wise king wore upon his finger a golden circlet inscribed, "Even this will pass away," that in days of grief he might look at it and find consolation; while in days of gladness he would know that joy never abides and not grow too secure in his comfort. So it was with Joshua, for soon the days of his happiness passed away never to return.

First his son, he who was to wear the scholar's crown and bring honor upon his father's name before all Israel, fell sick of a fever and between sundown and sunset he was dead. Rabbi Joshua's heart

was torn with his grief, but like Job of old he did not cry out against his Maker. "Shall we receive good from His hand and not evil?" he murmured to himself, seeking the consolation he had so often given to others. But just when the bitterness of his sorrow had lost its edge, a new blow crushed Joshua to the earth. Miriam, the little daughter with her mother's eyes, with sunny curls as fair as her mother's had been ere Joshua had led her beneath the marriage canopy, also sickened and died. And to Joshua it seemed that no greater sorrow could come to him, for he believed that a childless man is like one who is already dead.

But his grief softened his heart and in his black days he learned to share with others the sorrows that had never touched him before. Now when he sought to comfort a mourner, he spoke also to his own soul. So although he walked in sorrow all his days, the love of his wife and his ministry to others brightened his path.

Then she who had been the wife of his youth was taken from him; for a while it seemed to Joshua that his cup was too bitter to taste, that life was too dreadful to endure. In his loneliness he was unable to find solace even in his beloved books; he turned from his friends and those who had depended upon him as rabbi and counsellor. To him there was no sorrow in the whole universe like his sorrow; he brooded upon his grief from early morning until late at night, when for very weakness his heavy eyelids closed and for a little while he found peace in forgetfulness.

His dreadful grief might have broken his heart had not a sudden horror roused him from his selfish sorrow. On a bright spring morning, when the whole world was beautiful with sunshine and the song of birds, a peasant cried out that he had seen certain Jews mocking the Host as it was borne back to the church after the Easter procession. The news spread like a devouring flame and those who had lived for many years in brotherly peace with their Jewish neighbors now turned against them and sought their lives. There was a great slaughter that day and the Jewish quarter was burned and pillaged. And when night came only a few Jews survived, cowering and half-mad with fear among the charred ruins of their homes.

Sometimes a blow or a frightful shock breaks the spell of a man long tranced, and so it was with Rabbi Joshua. He alone of all the dazed survivors felt a new life springing within his heart. There was much to do, to bury the dead, to succor the wounded, to care for the orphans left helpless and bewildered in an unfriendly world. All this did Rabbi Joshua, and as he strove with all his heart to lighten the woes of those about him, his own woes disappeared and instead he bore the stripes and burdens of bleeding Israel.

Now when he prayed for the restoration of Zion and wept over the people dispersed and scattered, his tears were indeed bitter, for he thought of his own little flock, a remnant of a martyr people, torn and tortured as a lamb beneath the lion's paw. Now when he dreamed of a return for the wandering ones

of Israel, his soul burned with an ecstatic joy that was more terrible than pain. For he visioned the day when those whose persecutions he himself had shared should return to the land of their fathers, where God Himself would heal their wounds and wipe away their tears.

From early morning until late at night he pored over his books, searching out the prophecies which spoke of a redeemer for Zion. He was not lonely, although the few poor survivors of the massacre had drifted away to a more friendly place, for the hovel in which he dwelt was peopled with visions radiant with hope. And when night came and he sought to sleep he could not, so sorely did his passionate yearnings for Israel's salvation torment him and give him no rest. Still he was not lonely in the great silence, although the place beside him was empty and the soft breathing of his sleeping children no longer came to him through the darkness. Then he would rise and pray for the redemption of Zion, and although at such times he wept, his tears were not tears of despair.

Once, when the heat of summer lay over the land, he rose from his bed to pray. It was near midnight, and as he prayed it seemed to him that of all living things he was the only soul awake. Rabbi Joshua recalled that dawn would bring Tisha b'Av, the day on which the Temple at Jerusalem had been destroyed, long ago in the days of Jeremiah, who would never cease from grieving for the punishment of his people. And new hope flamed in the heart of Rabbi Joshua, for he remembered the saying of the

sages, that on the day the Temple was destroyed the Messiah would be born. Perhaps this very day his eager eyes might behold the face of Him who would bring deliverance to Zion.

Girding his robe about him, the old man opened his door and stepped out into the sleeping world. It seemed that an unseen hand was leading him toward the forest where the tall trees stood dreaming in the waning moonlight. He felt that once within the forest his eyes would behold what the eyes of man had never seen before, yet he was not afraid, so close had his prayers brought him to the knees of God.

In the forest, over which hung a great stillness, he wandered until dawn like a man in a dream. And at last he came to a clearing among the trees, a grassy spot he had never seen before, although he had long known every secret path of the forest as well as a man who knows the features of his beloved. And in the center of this grassy place sat a very old man, older even than Rabbi Joshua, his face hidden in the dark mantle he wore. But though his face was hidden, Rabbi Joshua knew him for Jeremiah, who has never ceased to mourn for Israel since his tortured eyes beheld the flaming ruins of the Temple upon Zion's hill.

Like a man in a dream, Rabbi Joshua spoke to him, having no fear: "O Jeremiah, do you still mourn for our Mother Zion? Has not the day come at last when she will be comforted and her captive sons return? Feed my heart with hope, for I have long prayed for that day to come."

But the shrouded figure spoke not, nor did he turn his head.

And Rabbi Joshua cried again: "O Jeremiah, have I not mourned, even as you? Have I not drunk the tears of affliction and eaten the bread of bitterness? Tell me, I pray you, when will our redeemer come and lead Israel into peace?"

Then the dark figure dropped its cloak and turned toward Rabbi Joshua a face of mingled sorrow and joy, a face long marked by grief and tears, yet shining with hope. His lips moved and Rabbi Joshua's heart almost ceased to beat in its eagerness, for surely Jeremiah, the prophet of Jerusalem, would speak to him of the day of return.

And even as Jeremiah the prophet opened his lips to speak, a great cloud descended and wrapped him from sight; and when the cloud had lifted there was no longer a clearing in the forest and Rabbi Joshua stood alone beneath the dreaming trees.

Dawn broke above the sleeping world and in a nearby nest a drowsy bird stirred its dewy wings and raised its voice in song.

SABBATH

THE JEWISH REST DAY

The Sabbath is the one Jewish holy day mentioned in the Ten Commandments, which instruct the Jew to "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy." In the days when the Temple stood it was a day of rest and special sacrifices and songs in the service. After the destruction of the Temple, prayers replaced the sacrificial ceremonies, and the Sabbath became a day of special prayer.

Today the Sabbath is observed in the synagogues both on Friday night and on Saturday morning. In many cases the worshippers also gather upon the Sabbath afternoon for quiet discussion of religious topics and a study of Jewish lore, especially "The Sayings of the Fathers."

But the observances of the Sabbath in the Jewish home are even more unique and beautiful. Here the family table becomes an altar, the father a priest, the mother a priestess of the home. The father on his return from the synagogue blesses the children, praying that they should become noble Jews; then, after the mother has lighted and blessed the lights, he makes Kiddush (sanctification) by pronouncing the Hebrew benedictions over the wine and the bread. The family meal becomes a sort of festival and is often prolonged by singing psalms and songs which have become identified with the Sabbath.

On Saturday evening as dusk falls and the first three

stars appear in the heavens the father performs the Havdalah or separation ceremony. With his hands extended over a candle that the flame shows both the light and the shadow, he again thanks God who has given the Jew his Sabbath, separating light from the darkness, rest from labor, the sacred from the profane. Often a spice box is waved that the Sabbath Princess may depart in a wave of sweet incense, and the happy festival is over.

According to one beautiful story, two angels always enter the Jewish home upon Sabbath eve and stand behind the master of the house when he returns from the synagogue. One is dark with an evil and somber face, the other gracious and beautiful. If the home is still in week-day disorder and the table undecked for the Sabbath feast, the bad angel declares in triumph, "May all this man's Sabbaths be like this," to which the good angel is forced to murmur a sad "Amen." But if the house is clean, the candles lighted, the table set for the Friday night feast, and the wife ready to welcome her husband, to be greeted in turn by his recital of Solomon's praise of the virtuous woman, then the good angel exclaims in delight: "May all this man's Sabbaths be like this," and the bad angel is forced to answer "Amen." An old parable written for a legend-loving people, but even the most rationalistic Jew today realizes that he who would receive the blessing of the Sabbath Bride must show himself worthy of her presence.

For through the homeless years of restriction and persecution the Jew could ever turn to his Sabbath as a day of peace and blessing. It was for him a portion of the goodly land set apart by the waves of the river Sambatyon from the turmoils and dangers of an unbelieving world.



SABBATH PEACE

*Lo, we who tasted exile's bread,
And drained the cup of tears,
Who hungered for Jerusalem
Through all the darkened years,*

*Now pause beside Sambatyon's wave;
And on our holy sod,
Wrapped in the dusk of Sabbath eve,
We know the peace of God.*

THE RIVER OF DREAMS

A Story of the Sabbath in Austria

A little low room in a humble house in the Jews' street of a medieval Austrian city, an old man sitting near the window to catch the last rays of the setting sun that he may read a little longer, since it is the Sabbath and he will light no taper. His long white beard sweeps the pages of the heavy book before him; his eyes sparkle with joy as he reads.

The story that Solomon ben Jacob read was an old one; he himself had heard it from his grandfather; the teacher in his Cheder had told it to him when he was but a child. An old story, yet the aged dreamer loved it as dearly now as in the days when, as a solemn-eyed little boy, he had planned to run away from the dark ghetto, past the iron gates into the green fields and on, on, across a smiling world until he found the River Sambatyon.

There is no river like it beneath the sun, say the rabbis of other days. For six days it flows with great force and fury and its roar may be heard for miles around. But on the seventh day, the Sabbath, it rests and becomes a river of peace. Beyond its waters dwell the sons of Moses, a tribe of happy men who know neither want nor pain nor sorrow.

“And are they really Jews?” little Solomon had asked his father wonderingly. For, child though he was, he knew only too well the burdens of the ghetto dwellers, scanty bread eaten with tears and water drunk with trembling beneath the shadow of the sword. His grandfather had once pointed to certain graves in the old Jewish cemetery where their dead lay huddled and despised as in life, and had told the wondering child of a priest-led mob that had crossed the ghetto threshold to pillage and to slay. Solomon’s grandfather had been a small boy at the time of the massacre, but he remembered the things he had seen and told his story so vividly that little Solomon sprang from his bed that night wild-eyed with terror and sought refuge in his mother’s arms. And the boy never forgot his grandfather’s tale, never threw off his fear that some day the Gentiles beyond the ghetto gates might again rise in hatred and sweep like a destructive wave over his people. No wonder then that he found it hard to believe a Jew might be happy, that after hearing of the mystic river he longed to dwell with the sons of Moses upon its peaceful banks.

The years brought wisdom and the boy knew that he would never find the river; yet he loved the old story with a strange love even after he had reached the years of manhood and his own children climbed his knee to listen to his stories. The river of dreams flowed through the darkness of his poverty and privations; smiling at his own folly, he sometimes pictured for himself the land beyond the Sambatyon, a place of prosperity and peace.

Now Solomon ben Jacob was an old man, so old that sometimes he fell a-dreaming stories in the daytime, just as a little child loves to dream. His own children were dead save one, who wandered in other lands, and it was his granddaughter, Rachel, a gentle girl of rare beauty, who kept his house and cheered his old age. As the shadows lengthened he glanced from time to time through the little window. Rachel had left him to walk with friends out into the green fields beyond the ghetto gates. But the gates closed at sunset and she had not returned. He might have felt some anxiety, but now he had reached that milestone for the aged which marks freedom from care; they feel that they have passed through the turmoils of life and nothing can disturb their peace until they pass into the greater peace which lies just before them.

He smiled a little as he read again of his dream river, half closing his eyes as though he saw beyond the shadowy room a land flowing with milk and honey, a place far off from the daily grind and want of the ghetto life he had always known. He pictured himself walking with his beloved Rachel—not his granddaughter but his own wife, now dead so many years—beneath the trees whose branches were bowed with strange fruits. And so real was his picture he almost seemed to hear the roar of the river whose waves would sink into peace upon the Sabbath.

At that very moment beyond the ghetto gates, another river was rising, a river of hate and violence, a river of blood. A fanatical mob, always dry tim-

ber ready to flare into flame, had fallen upon a group of Jewish youths who had ventured into the city, and had handled them with such brutality that two lay dead upon the ground. The madness spread, the lust for Jewish blood inflamed those who had looked upon the outrage—and another massacre was written in gory letters upon the dark pages of Israel's history.

Rachel's young companions had dragged her into the synagogue, where, huddled in the women's gallery, they looked fearfully down upon the men and boys who gathered behind the barred doors waiting for the struggle that would come when the maddened mob sought to tear them from their sanctuary. Once the girl moaned with white lips, "My grandfather!" and closed her eyes. She pictured him, old and helpless, trampled beneath the feet of those who rushed through the ghetto like hungry wolves, tearing all in their path. He had been a father to her for many years; she must not let him die alone.

A look of determination in her gentle eyes, Rachel groped her way through the dark gallery to the stairs. But those who guarded the entrance of the synagogue would not let her pass.

"It will be worse than death," cried out an old neighbor, catching her arm. "You cannot aid him; and who knows but that we will be spared if their fury is spent before they reach us here. Believe that he himself speaks to you through his old friend, and save yourself if you can."

"My grandfather!" repeated the girl again, and tried to force her way to the door.

And now a youth her own age restrained her. "Rachel, beloved," he whispered, "stay here with the others."

A rosy gladness flushed her face; she looked up at him with luminous eyes. He had never told her of his love and now his confession robbed this place of death of its horrors.

"How could I ask you to wed me," he whispered, drawing her aside, "when the cursed laws against our people forbid me to marry before my older brother? But you must have known how I loved you. Rachel, beloved, if we must die, let us die here together."

In the dimness of the corner where they stood apart from the others she mutely raised her face to his and he placed a solemn kiss of betrothal upon her lips. Outside the sound of the howling, blood-inflamed mob grew closer, but the lovers did not tremble as they gazed into each other's eyes.

In a humble house not far off another heard the sullen roaring and was not afraid. An old man sitting near the window, his long beard sweeping the pages of his book, gazed with dreamy eyes out into the gathering dusk. He mused, as he sat, of the mystical river, the river of Sabbath dreams. There was peace beyond its waters and he was very tired and longed for rest. The dull roaring drew nearer and nearer. A strange light filled his weary eyes. Perhaps, he told himself, he was not dreaming after all. Perhaps the Master of Life, blessed be His Name, had brought his aged feet to the brink of the dream river; perhaps he already heard its waters

bidding him welcome. The Sabbath was over, he told himself, and the waves were rising again, praising God as they thundered beneath the evening sky. The noise grew louder and louder; he closed his eyes, his head nodding. In the sweet dizziness that swayed him as he sat with his book upon his knees he could almost imagine that the waves of the far-away river were covering him and drawing him to the farther shore.

The mob crashed past, rending and slaying as it went. Several madmen flung themselves into the quiet room. A moment later they rushed forth, leaving a tired old man asleep upon the floor, his head resting upon the encrimsoned pages of the book that lay beside him. Peacefully, without doubt and without pain, the aged dreamer had passed from the peace of his dreaming into the Sabbath of a greater, surer peace.

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